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A
DISCOURSE

UPON

REPENTANCE.

BY THOMAS SCOTT,
MORNING PREACHER AT THE LOCK CHAPEL.

THE SECOND EDITION.

AND THEY WENT FORTH, AND PREACHED THAT
MEN SHOULD REPENT.—Mark vi. 12.

L O N D O N:

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P R E F A C E.

THE importance of the subject treated of, and the rank which it holds in the word of God, amongst the doctrines, and duties of christianity: the backwardness of mankind to attend to it, in proportion to that importance: and an apprehension, that it is not insisted on, either from the pulpit, or the press, so frequently and strenuously in our times, as it was in the days of the apostles; form, collectively, the reasons which induced me to this publication. Much ignorance, and various detrimental and perplexing mistakes and difficulties about repentance, may be observed, both amongst professors of serious godliness, and others: I therefore thought, that it might not be unreasonable, or unprofitable, to publish a discourse upon the subject.

My first intention was only to send to the press the substance of a sermon, I had repeatedly preached: but the same reasons influenced me, upon mature consideration, to complete the design, as far as I was capable: though the size and price be both by that means encreased.

Some passages may be judged to bear hard upon certain popular sentiments, and current species of religion. I have, indeed, very plainly spoken my mind respecting several things, which I am convinced are detrimental

tal to the cause of pure religion: but I hope, I have not transgressed the rules of meekness and candour. Even wise and good men, in their zeal for one part of divine truth, may drop unguarded expressions, that may *bear an interpretation* injurious to another part of equal importance; and thus, undesignedly, by their reputation, give sanction to error. This our artful and watchful enemy will be sure to observe, and make his advantage of, in opposing true religion: whereby some may be deceived, others hardened, and religion itself exposed to contempt and reproach.

It behoves, then, other friends of religion, who are witnesses of such perversions, to oppose, and obviate them: nor must the reputation of some, or the censure of others amongst their fellow-servants be regarded, when the glory of God, the interests of religion, and the salvation of souls are at stake. Were some pious men, now in glory, to return on earth, and witness the abuse that has been made of some indiscrete expressions they employed, they would be the first to approve our endeavours, to counteract their fatal tendency. With all plainness and freedom, I would plead the cause of truth and holiness; but would give no *needless* offence to any man. May that God, whom I would serve with my spirit, in the gospel of his Son, powerfully succeed this feeble attempt to promote his glory, in the salvation of souls.

THOMAS SCOTT.

OLNEY, Feb. 2, 1785.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Christian Religion, as St. Paul preached it both to Jews and Gentiles, consists of "repentance towards God, and "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ;" and is therefore properly called the religion of a sinner; for none but sinners need repentance, or faith in a mediator, or that forgiveness of sins, which through him is preached to all, that believe.

This consideration ought carefully to be attended to: Jesus Christ "came not to call "the righteous, but sinners to repentance:" and if men lose sight of this peculiarity of the gospel, they will mistake in a fundamental concern, and be offended with those ministers who alone address them in a scriptural method. Our business, as preachers of the gospel, is not with men, *merely* as rational agents, but with men as sinners. We must not address them, as if they were newly entered on a state of trial, were as yet free from all blame, and were at last to stand or fall according to their future good or bad behaviour; and only needed to be instructed in their duty, and excited to perform it. This is not the state of the case. Even the most moral, respectable, and amiable of mankind, are sinners, condemned sinners. In this light the word of God considers us and informs

us, (not what good thing we may do to inherit eternal life, but) what we must do to be saved from impending ruin; whither a sinner "may flee from the wrath to come." And thus must the faithful minister address his hearers, calling upon them as sinners, to repent, and believe the gospel.

"By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men*." In consequence of the awful sentence, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return." Millions through successive generations have yielded to the stroke: all the former inhabitants of the earth are swept into the grave by one general execution: numbers are at this moment experiencing the agonies of death: numbers are bewailing their departed and departing friends, and relatives.—We too feel the consequences of sin in our own personal pains and sickness, which are the forerunners and earnest of our dissolution: we, too, must have the sentence executed upon us in all its rigour. The wisest cannot elude, the strongest cannot resist; nor can the richest purchase exemption from it.

The constant and extensive ravages of death are in themselves extremely affecting to the considerate spectator: but become more so when we reflect, that as certainly as when a malefactor is dragged from prison, and exe-

* Rom. v. 12.

cuted on a scaffold, he dies for breaking the laws of the land : so certainly, when a sinner dies, he dies for breaking the law of God.

Had sin and death been hitherto equally unknown to mankind ; and now in our days had sin first made its entrance : immediately upon man's rebellion had we heard the sentence audibly and solemnly denounced ; “ Dust ye are, and to dust ye shall return : ” had fevers, dropfies, palsies, apoplexies, consumptions, and other mortal diseases on one hand ; earthquakes, famines, and wars on the other, suddenly begun to spread desolation through families, villages, cities, and kingdoms, amongst the guilty alone : should we behold at once multitudes dead, and multitudes in the agonies of death, the rest mourning over their beloved friends, and trembling for themselves (like Egypt when there was not an house, in which there was not one dead) : the connexion betwixt transgressing the divine law, and being punished with death, might be more affecting, not more certain than it is ; though seldom seriously laid to heart by us.

Or were men in general free from sin ; but from time to time one and another transgressed ; who, immediately upon transgressing, were punished by death, (according to examples of vindictive justice recorded in the scriptures), the connexion would be more attended to, not more certain than at present ;

present; when, “because sentence against an
 “evil work is not executed *speedily*, the
 “hearts of the sons of men are wholly set
 “in them to do evil *.”

But as all have sinned, and all die, and things have gone on so for many generations, death is considered as a thing of course: we live in the midst of it's devastations without horror, or uneasy reflections; enquire little why it is so? or what the consequence will be? Like soldiers, who grow inured to scenes of blood, and insensible to danger, through being familiar with them.

But this, solemn and alarming as it is, forms but a small part of the sentence of condemnation, which we lie under. Our Lord warns us, “not to fear them that kill
 “the body, and after that have no more that
 “they can do; but to fear him, who is able
 “to destroy both body and soul in hell.” In comparison with this effect of divine wrath, the worst that men can do to us, is not, in the judgment of the Son of God, worthy our fear. Yet the bare recital of those tortures, which the cruelty of man hath invented, and inflicted in killing the body, is sufficient to chill our very blood: how dreadful therefore must they have been to those, who endured them! What then must that misery be, compared with which, the other is not worth a fear! Yet to this awful de-

* Eccles. viii. 11.

struction are we all condemned, for breaking the law, and rebelling against the authority of our Creator, as will be shewn hereafter.

Imagine to yourselves a company of condemned criminals in a dungeon. A warrant arrives, one is taken from them, they see him no more, nor what becomes of him; and do not readily believe any reports which reach them, of the tortures he endured, and the death he suffered: another is thus taken from them, and another. The remainder still suppose that their companions are only released from the miseries of a dungeon; and expect their own turn merely as a similar deliverance. All this time, however, certain messengers from the king earnestly persuade them to submit, ask forgiveness, and accept of mercy. A few are prevailed upon, and are dismissed: but the rest, seeing no difference betwixt those, who are taken from them by a warrant; and those who are set at liberty with a pardon, persist in their obstinacy, and treat all persuasion with neglect and contempt.

This is the exact representation of the condition men are in. Death removes our friends and neighbours, one by one: we see not how they fare in another world; nor are disposed to believe that they lift up their eyes in hell, being in torments (though this is indeed the awful condition of all who die impenitent). Our turn will shortly come; but

but we are seldom duly apprehensive about the consequences. "All thing happen alike" to all; as dieth the sinner, so dieth the "righteous:" each is released from the evils of life; faith alone can follow the one to heaven, and the other to hell: but all men have not faith; therefore the most treat with neglect and contempt the preachers of the gospel, who inform them of their danger, and in God's name call upon them to repent, believe, and be saved.

But, beloved, though much grieved and discouraged by this neglect, we must not desist, nor would we despair of success. Let me beseech you then to keep in mind these solemn and important truths, whilst with all seriousness, earnestness, and melting compassion, I address you as condemned sinners, in danger of eternal misery. We must take God's part against you, and vindicate his justice in that awful sentence he hath denounced: but we can sympathize with you, and weep over you, and long after you in the bowels of Jesus Christ. We also were involved in the same guilt, and under the same condemnation: we were equally secure, and obstinate in sin, and equally negligent of salvation. But being now, through God's mercy, made sensible of our guilt, and danger; having, upon repentance found forgiveness, and experiencing the hopes, and first-fruits of eternal happiness, we are desirous

sirous our fellow-sinners should share our deliverance, and experience our felicity.

To be instrumental in the salvation of your souls, my fellow-sinners, is all to which the true minister of Christ aspires. However your minds may be blinded by the god of this world, we see your danger, and mourn over your delusion. Your fondness for perishing vanities, and your disregard to your eternal interest, excite our compassion; and would excite our indignation and astonishment, had not we too been equally sottish. Of the worth of your souls, the danger they are exposed to, the preciousness of salvation, and the happiness of being truly religious, we are deeply convinced. "We have believed, and therefore speak." And being entrusted with the ministry of reconciliation (however insufficient, and unworthy) "we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled unto God."

The most high God hath prepared a royal feast, all things are ready, rich abundance of provisions, and plenty of room. We are sent to invite the guests, and are to "compel them to come in." We would therefore invite, entreat, exhort, expostulate, warn, persuade, and command with all tenderness and authority; and not take a denial. Blame not, I beseech you, our earnestness; be not disgusted, or offended with our importunity;

portunity ; do not pray us to have you excused ; do not overwhelm us with discouragement, and send us to give, with tears, an account of our ill success. Our love to your immortal souls, our longing after your everlasting happiness, constrain us to be thus troublesome, and offensive to you. Nay, though you frown, insult, threaten, and persecute, we must persist, so long as there is the shadow of a hope. “ We must not be overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” And at last, if ye will not hear, we must weep in secret places for your pride ; after his example, who wept over ungrateful Jerusalem.

To the true believer, careless sinners appear like intoxicated persons in a house, which is on fire ; who must be consumed in the flames, unless they can be induced to come forth ; though themselves are utterly insensible of their danger. You may think yourselves secure, and make yourselves merry with our fears : but your awful infatuation, and imminent danger, are so manifest to us, that we must persist in our endeavours to convince you, as long as you are on this side everlasting burnings. Thus Noah was treated by the inhabitants of the old world, and Lot even by his sons in law, with neglect and contempt, when they warned them of their danger ; but too late they found their warnings true : and so will you find ours, when death and judgment come,

come, should you now slight them. "Be-
 " cause I called, and ye refused ; I stretched
 " out my hand, and no man regarded ; I also
 " will laugh at your calamity, and mock
 " when your fear cometh," saith the Lord
 himself *.--But I would rise superior to such
 discouraging apprehensions, and expect better
 success in this feeble attempt to call sinners
 to repentance : humbly hoping that the
 Lord will hear my prayers, and employ this
 discourse as his instrument in the blessed
 work.

When John the Baptist began his ministry,
 he preached ; " Repent ye, for the kingdom
 " of heaven is at hand." The blessed Jesus
 also began to preach ; " Repent ye, for the
 " kingdom of heaven is at hand." And the
 apostles " went forth, and preached that men
 " should repent." After the resurrection of
 Christ, they were commissioned " to preach
 " repentance and forgiveness of sins to all
 " nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Accord-
 ingly, Peter preached to the Jews, " Repent
 " ye, and be converted, that your sins may
 " be blotted out." Paul in like manner ad-
 dressed the Gentiles. " God commandeth
 " all men, every where, to repent ;" and in-
 formed them, that men should repent, and
 " turn to God, and do works meet for re-
 " pentance."

* Prov. i. 24, 26.

From these, and many other testimonies of the word of God, judge ye, beloved, of the importance and certainty of our subject. No matter of trivial concern, which may safely be disregarded; or of doubtful disputation, which may plausibly be gainsayed, or questioned, now demands our attention. But a subject of equal evidence with the word of God, who cannot lie, and of importance proportioned to the interests of eternal ages.

Hear me then, I beseech you, with candour and attention; lay aside prejudice and levity, whilst with all seriousness and plainness I discourse concerning, 1. The necessity of repentance. 2. The nature of repentance. 3. The encouragement given to repentance. 4. The proper season for repentance. And, 5. The means to be used in repenting. For the love of thy soul, I beseech thee, sinner: and as thou wilt answer it at the day of judgment, I charge it upon thy conscience, to lay this matter home to thy heart, as in the sight of God; at the same time beseeching him to make thee partaker “of that repentance, which is unto salvation, not to be repented of.”

PART THE FIRST.

Concerning the Necessity of REPENTANCE.

BEFORE we enter more fully upon the subject, I would premise, that I choose the word *Necessity*, as the most comprehensive, which occurs to my mind. And I would be understood to intend by ‘the necessity of repentance:’ 1. The urgency of the case; sinners must either repent, or perish. 2. It’s reasonableness: having done wrong we ought to repent, and act most unreasonably, if we do not. 3. The obligation sinners are under to repent, both from this reasonableness of the injunction, and the authority of that God, who enjoins it. And 4. The additional guilt contracted by impenitency. As the same arguments frequently prove the necessity of repentance in more than one of these senses, I thought it would better prevent needless repetition, and obscurity in point of method, to treat of the whole at once, than to divide them into different heads. Having thus stated the meaning of the term employed, to prevent ambiguity, and that all may know what we say, and whereof we affirm, let us proceed to the proof.

And here, reader, I have no need to enquire into thy character, whether thou art

moral, or immoral; a sober man, or a drunkard; a good, or bad member of society, or relation; a formal worshipper, or prophane. Granting all that any man can desire, supposing the character of the reader to be decent, amiable, and respectable amongst men, I will endeavour to shew him; to shew all, their need of repentance.

I. "Because all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."—There are but few who are acquainted with the extent, strictness, and spirituality of the law of God, as taking cognizance of every thought, word, action, intencion, or disposition of the whole heart and life; requiring absolute perfection in all things, continued in even to the last moment of their days. There are but few, who keep any exact account of their own thoughts, words, and actions, with reference to the law as the standard of duty, and sin: consequently there are but few who are sensible in any tolerable degree how numerous, or rather how innumerable their transgressions are. But most, or all know that in some instances they have offended God, by doing those actions which he hath forbidden, and leaving undone those which he hath commanded. Surely, reader, thy conscience will excuse me from further evincing this particular. Only listen to this faithful monitor: even now it arraigns, accuses, and condemns thee: and wast thou guilty only of one transgression

gression (instead of those millions, which are noted in God's book of remembrance) and shouldst thou die without repenting of that one sin: as sure as conscience now condemns thee, so sure will God condemn thee in that solemn day, when he shall judge "the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."

One felony or murder, fully proved, ensures condemnation, equally with ten thousand. "Therefore, by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God." "Because all have sinned." "And by the law is the knowledge of sin." It takes cognizance of, and condemns every sin, and every sinner; and consequently can justify none, who hath once transgressed. But remember, that the number and heinousness of our transgressions, though they add nothing to the *certainly*, yet will add proportionably to the *greatness* of the merited condemnation; and should add to the depth of our repentance. Could that man be found who had once, and but once, and in the smallest instance failed of obedience, he would need repentance, it would be his duty, nor could he be saved in impenitence. How needful then repentance for him, whose sins exceed in number the hairs of his head, and equal the moments of his life! For him,

whose crimes are full of aggravation, and loudly cry for vengeance !

II. The law we have broken is “ holy, “ just, and good.”—There are laws in this land, which condemn the murderer and housebreaker to death. These are reasonable laws, of which none can disapprove, but those, who are, or would be guilty of those crimes. We experience them to be the security of our persons, property, and repose. He, who breaks these laws, is not only condemned by *them*, but in the judgment of every wise and honest man ; and ought in reason to condemn himself, (like the penitent thief) allowing the justice of the punishment he suffers.

But Nebuchadnezzar made a law, commanding all to worship a golden image, on penalty of being cast into a furnace of fire. And Darius made a law, forbidding all to worship God for thirty days, on pain of being cast into the den of lions. And many such laws have the tyranny, caprice, and pride of imperious princes produced. But such laws are evidently absurd and impious, and every man will abhor them in proportion to his wisdom and goodness. The three pious Jews, who broke Nebuchadnezzar’s law, and Daniel, who transgressed that of Darius, were indeed condemned by the laws ; but admired for their courage, and constancy in *disobedience*, by all good men ever since.

Nay,

Nay, the very consciences of their enemies testified for them, that they had done nothing amiss. Nor would it have been right for them to have condemned themselves; but rather they might glory in serving God, and keeping a good conscience in the face of danger and death.

Were the law of God in any degree like these oppressive edicts, we should have cause to be extremely grieved at the hardship put upon us, and alarmed at the sentence denounced against us: but we could not, with any propriety, condemn ourselves, or repent of our transgressions.

We ought not indeed to reply against God: but the absurdity of such presumption arises not so much from the consideration of his irresistible power, and uncontrollable sovereignty, as from that of his absolute perfection of justice and holiness, whereby he regulates all his conduct. This we are bound humbly to allow and suppose, even when we cannot perceive it; and to silence all our rising objections with, "Shall not the Judge
" of all the earth do right?" Yet God condescends himself to argue the matter with those, who thought his ways unequal: he ever proposes his conduct in his government of the world to our consideration, that we may see and adore his justice; and to our imitation, that we may be holy as he is holy: and the day of judgment will clear up all
our

our difficulties, and the righteousness of God will be fully demonstrated, to the universal satisfaction of God's holy creatures, and the confusion and silence of all his enemies. It is indeed blasphemy, to suppose God's law unreasonable, and his government oppressive: but it is a blasphemy congenial to our depraved nature; of which, in our hearts, we are all guilty, and of which we are with difficulty cured: for "the carnal mind is
 " enmity against God, is not subject to the
 " law of God, nor indeed can be."

As therefore no sinner can be truly penitent, till he is convinced of the equitableness of the law of God; the proper way of bringing sinners to repentance is to prove that the law is holy, just, and good. This is the apostolical method: St. Paul especially arguing in the epistle to the Romans against justification by the law; aware of the false conclusions men of corrupt minds would be ready to draw from his reasonings, again and again, purposely leaves his main subject, to assert and prove the goodness of the law notwithstanding. With one accord, also, do all the writers of the sacred volume speak honourably of the *moral* law, expressing their approbation of it, and delight in it; nor is there one exception to this rule. This may shew us the great Importance of this part of the subject: and how dangerous some inconsiderate expressions are, into which some good men

men have been betrayed, in their zeal for that *fundamental doctrine, justification by faith alone.*

We may be sure, that the law is holy, just, and good; because given by a holy, just, and good God, whose work is perfect: because after Adam's fall, when it became *morally* impracticable for any of his posterity to be justified by it; he is still pleased to continue them under it, judge them according to it, and condemn them to utter destruction* for breaking it. "Is there unrighteousness with God?" He would not do these things, if they were not perfectly just. If they appear

* All who die in unbelief, perish for breaking this law: all who are saved, were thus condemned for breaking it: else why did Christ bear their sins for them? Some indeed talk of another and milder law; but where 'tis found, when promulgated, what it requires, who does keep it, or who is condemned for breaking it, hath never been, nor ever can be determined. Others express themselves very ambiguously, about our obligations to keep the law, prior to the consideration of redemption. But where there is no law, there can be no transgression: where there is no transgression, there can be no condemnation: and where no condemnation, no occasion of redemption. Thus we repeal the law, and subvert the gospel. Surely, we ought with precision to determine this matter; and to shew, that man as God's creature, is bound to obey his law: that sin is the transgression of the law: that the wages of sin is death: that Christ died (not for Adam's sin only, or mainly, but) for our transgressions of the law. That they who perish, are condemned (not because Adam sinned *only*, or *mainly*, but) for their own sins. That upon believing in Christ, we are delivered from the condemnation of sinners; but never released from the obedience we owe as creatures; though now enforced by additional motives, taken from redemption.

unjust

unjust to us, it is owing to our ignorance, self-love, low thoughts of God, and favourable thoughts of sin. Nay, so far was God from repealing this law, or abating it's strictness, after man's transgression, that he republished it from mount Sinai, with awful majesty: he requires every one, who would escape condemnation at the day of judgment, to condemn himself now for his transgressions of it; and to seek forgiveness from his sovereign mercy: Nor would he even thus pardon one sinner, unless his own Son honoured the law in our stead, by his perfect obedience and death upon the cross. Moreover, he gives it into the hand of all believers as a rule of life, a standard of sin and holiness; yea, writes it in their hearts by the Holy Spirit. Thus doth the most high God proclaim to the whole world his determination "to magnify the law, and make it honourable." And had we no other evidence of it's excellency; this, being abundantly sufficient, ought fully to satisfy us; yea, to humble us in the dust for acting so unreasonably, as to break it.

But may we not ourselves discern the reasonableness of it, notwithstanding our partiality in our own cause, and love of sin. God is evidently the perfection of glory and beauty *, the pattern and fountain of loveli-

* Psa. l. 2. Out of Zion, the *perfection of beauty* God hath shined.

ness: from whom all that is lovely in all creatures is an emanation; of whom it is a faint resemblance, which hath comparatively "no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth." In himself he is therefore worthy of all admiration, love and worship. From him we derive our existence, and all that rendereth our existence comfortable: our obligations therefore to him as our creator and benefactor, are immense; he deserves then our entire and unreserved gratitude. Infinite love and gratitude, though he is worthy of them, his law demands not; because we are not capable of them. Nor doth it require the love and service of an angel; because he hath not endowed us with angelic capacities. The law demands this: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with
"all thy heart, and mind, and soul, and
"strength:" its requirements are proportioned not to his worthiness, but to our capacities. Of this love the man of the slenderest abilities is equally capable with the sublimest genius; the infant as the aged. In proportion to the superiority or inferiority of capacity, more or less is required: if it be honestly *our all*, the law demands no more.

But the law makes no allowance for our disinclination and indisposition to love and serve God with *our all*; because this is that very malignity of disposition, which renders us abominable in God's sight. Every degree

of this temper is a degree of enmity unto God: the very disposition arises from pride, love of the world, and love of sin; and in proportion as it prevails, is dislike unto, and contempt of God in the comparison with the world, sin, and self. It is therefore in itself infinitely unreasonable, and totally inexcusable, and the very temper of the devil; who is therefore completely detestable, because completely of this abominable disposition*.

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* This disposition is properly original sin, the effect of Adam's transgression. Therefore he, as the root, and we in him, as the branches, lost God's favour and image, and became liable to, and fit for destruction. That this disposition is propagated by natural generation cannot reasonably be denied: that it is properly the punishment of Adam's sin seems capable of scriptural proof. If we cannot clearly perceive the justice of this, we must silence our objections thus: "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" True penitents read their own character, and see their own picture in Adam's conduct, and are humbled for original sin, as the fountain of all their actual transgressions. But as it is always either disputed or abused, until the heart be otherwise humbled, I did not think it so proper particularly to insist upon it in this discourse.—Whilst some appear to lay an undue stress on Adam's transgression, and speak as if it were the only sin, for which we are condemned, or Christ died: others totally deny, and revile the doctrine of the fall; contending that man now is just such a creature, with respect to his moral character, and dispositions, as God originally created him. But the apostle Paul more than intimates that the image of God consists in righteousness, and true holiness. Now we know that God created man in his own IMAGE: he also made him upright; and pronounced him very good. The question therefore is, what man now is? If experience and observation prove him to be naturally, and universally prone to evil, and averse from good; and if the scripture pronounce him *evil*, and abominable, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart to be only evil continually: he must be fallen from what he was originally.—Ingratitude, enmity to God, pride, ambition, envy, malice, lust, falsehood,

—When we therefore shew that the law is holy, just, and good, because exactly level to our capacities, we mean our *natural powers*, not our *moral dispositions*: the want of the former proportionably excuses; the want of the latter proportionably aggravates every failure of any given degree of service. Man, having not the powers of an angel, is excusable in not performing the services of an angel: but being of an unholy disposition, is therefore the more inexcusable in any particular act of unholiness; seeing it appears that it was no inadvertency, but the rooted disposition of his heart.

To love and serve God with our all is the substance of the requirements of the law in the first table. And what can be more reasonable? Can there be any difficulty in loving one so lovely, being thankful to such a friend, or serving such a master, except

falsehood, and covetousness, can form no part of the image of a holy God; or of that uprightness, in which man was first made. But he must be very hardy, who should deny them to form a part of man's present character. Nor can we suppose the God of truth would first pronounce man very good, and afterwards without any intervening change, so often declare him altogether abominable. How much more becoming our narrow capacities, and proneness to mistake, to rest satisfied with the scriptural account; "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners;" and to adore the depths we cannot fathom: than in the pride of philosophy, and metaphysics, with such scanty information, to decide upon what we cannot comprehend, and with rash temerity to utter such words, as more than seem to be injurious to the divine character.

what arises from the inexcusable badness of our hearts? For this we are condemned, for this we ought to condemn ourselves, "abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes."

To love all men with equal estimation and benevolence, is the substance of the second table: and we need only suppose this law given to our neighbours alone, as the rule of their conduct towards us, that we may perceive it's excellency. What lovely, happy creatures should we be, and what a delightful world would this be, were all perfectly obedient? None is, or can be miserable but the transgressor, or they whom transgressors injure. How excellent then this law, which provides for the happiness of the world so completely, that by transgression alone could any become in any degree miserable! And ought we not then to repent of our disobedience, our continual disobedience, and especially of our entire depravity of disposition, which renders us *morally* incapable of obedience.

Let every precept be impartially examined, and these things will appear with still more convincing evidence. For instance: "Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy." Is it not highly reasonable that we should devote this portion of our time to him, to whom the whole belongs? Would not our best interest, in connection with the glory of God, be promoted by obeying this

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commandment? "These things he commands us for our good." How unreasonable then our disobedience! What need have we to repent of forgetting, and neglecting to hallow the sabbath!

Again, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them." As we all judge it reasonable that others should thus behave to us; let conscience determine, whether we have not done wrong in, and ought not to repent of, transgressing this rule in our conduct to others. We might easily examine other precepts, and shew them to be equally reasonable. Yea, every one of them is so; and therefore every deviation from perfect obedience is entirely unreasonable. There is nothing in the whole law of God grievous in itself; or difficult, except to our proud and carnal hearts.—David and Paul, men after God's own heart, greatly loved, and delighted in God's law: Christ, being perfectly holy, entirely delighted in it, and perfectly obeyed it: angels, and saints in glory are completely at liberty in obeying it, and find it perfect felicity: yea, God himself, though absolute sovereign, is pleased to observe in his own conduct, the same rules, he prescribes for our's (as far as consists with his majesty and authority) his law is the transcript of his own holiness: when he requires our obedience, he only says, "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

In proportion as we bear his image we take pleasure in his precepts, and find obedience easy and natural : in proportion as we resemble satan, we hate the law, and find obedience irksome, arduous, impossible. How excellent then this law ! How vile are we who have broke it ! What need have we to repent of our unreasonable conduct !

III. All have need to repent, because all have by sin absolutely destroyed themselves. A trifling penalty incurred by transgression might reasonably have been disregarded. When human laws only inflict small fines, short imprisonment, or burning in the hand, offenders may treat such penalties with indifference : but when excruciating tortures, and ignominious death, are the threatened punishment ; when the sentence is impartially and rigorously inflicted ; when the crime is fully proved, and the prisoner closely confined, the most stubborn spirit bends, the stoutest heart is intimidated, and indifference is madness. Art thou then, sinner, careless and unconcerned in a case infinitely more tremendous ? Canst thou find a heart for gay amusements, or coolly apply to worldly pursuits, whilst the wrath of God abideth upon thee, the law thunders out a dreadful curse against thee, death closely pursues thee, everlasting misery awaits thee ? That God, whom thou hast offended, is at once the witness, judge, and avenger of thy crimes : thou
canst

canst not hide thy transgressions from his all-seeing eye: thou canst not flee from his omnipresence, resist his almighty power, bribe his inflexible justice, or endure his awful vengeance. Thy sentence, if thou die impenitent, is already published in the judge's own words: "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Are not these words of the loving Saviour most dreadful? Can thy hands be strong, or can thy heart endure when they shall sound in thy affrighted ears? Is this the wrath to come, surely, inevitably to come upon an ungodly world? Are they his words, who saith, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away?" And art thou one of the very persons concerned? A transgressor of the law; and the word of God saith, "Cursed be every one, who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." And dost thou still remain unconcerned? Indeed, were there no way of escape, it would not be worth thy while to torment thyself before the time. But there is forgiveness with God, there is a space allowed for repentance, a way of salvation, a proclamation of mercy: and dost thou still trifle, and not apply thyself immediately to seek deliverance from the wrath to come.

Surely these considerations, if laid to heart in a manner suitable to their certainty and

importance, would damp the vain mirth of an ungodly world, and turn their songs and laughter into bitter lamentations. Let me, my fellow-sinners, recommend the apostle's advice to you: "Be afflicted, and mourn, " and weep; let your laughter be turned " into mourning, and your joy into heaviness*." Thus shall you, in godly sorrow for sin, "work repentance unto salvation " not to be repented of."

IV. The necessity of repentance appears from the justice of this sentence, severe as it may seem. Sinners are ready to say, "I only " gratify my natural inclinations, and enjoy " a little irregular pleasure for a few years; " and can it consist with the justice and goodness of God to punish me with everlasting misery for it? Is there any proportion between the crime and the punishment?" But consider, poor deluded man, the infinite majesty, purity, and goodness of that God, against whom thy sins are committed: consider that "his is the kingdom, and the " power, and the glory, for ever:" consider thy relations to him, as his creature, his property, his subject: the reasonableness of his claim to thy love and obedience, resulting both from his own excellency and authority, and the benefits he hath conferred on thee: consider the reasonableness of his law, the pleasantness of his service, the happiness of

* James iv. 9.

his subjects, and the noble rewards of obedience : then estimate, if thou art able, what injustice, ingratitude, rebellion, contempt, enmity, and obstinacy, there is in sin, and what punishment is adequate to its deservings.

If a man injure his equal, it is evil ; if he injure his superior, it is worse. If a child curse, smite, or murder his parent, his conduct is baser, than it had been, had he thus treated a stranger or an equal. The wiser, better, and more indulgent the parent, the more atrocious is the crime of the unnatural, ungrateful child. Should a son murder an excellent parent in the midst of recent profusions of kindness, without any provocation ; or motive, except in order to the more unrestrained gratification of some vile passion, what punishments should we deem too severe for the parricide ? Add further the relation of sovereign to that of parent, a rightful, wise, just, clement sovereign, the common father of his people. For a persecuted David to stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed, though a cruel, treacherous Saul, would have been highly criminal : how much more to murder *such* a prince without provocation ! for his favourite, on whom his bounty had been lavished, to be the assassin ! But for his son, his indulged son, to break through all obligations, human and divine, and murder his father and prince at once, that he might more unrestrainedly indulge his lusts, would stamp the action with stupendous

pendous baseness ! When Absalom in design acted this monstrous part against the man after God's own heart, even the ill judged lenity of the too indulgent parent was not permitted to rescue the traitor from deserved punishment.—According to the plainest dictates of human reason, the malignity of the action must rise in proportion to the authority and excellency of the party offended, and the offender's relations and obligations to him. In human affairs, this method of computing the comparative criminality of offences, and proportioning punishments, is generally adopted amongst civilized nations. If we are allowed to compute in the same method *the evil of sin* (and why should we not ?) what heart can conceive, or tongue express, or numbers reach the evil of every offence committed against the majesty of God ! By arguments and meditations of this kind, we may arrive at some feeble conception of the odiousness of transgressing the divine law : but he alone, who sees all things exactly as they are, is the competent judge. And my design is not to demonstrate a matter before doubtful, but to illustrate the reasonableness of that which is certainly true. Whether we see, and allow it, or not, sin is infinitely evil, and deserving of eternal punishment. Thus he hath determined, “ whose judgment we know to be according unto truth.” All his loyal subjects on earth join in praising him “ as righteous in all his ways,
“ and

“ and holy in all his works.” All the inhabitants of heaven will thus praise him, even while “ the smoke of the torments of the “ wicked ascendeth up for ever and ever.” None but rebels think the sentence too severe. If we would not have our lot amongst *them* in another world, let us not rank ourselves amongst them in this: but let us say, with holy Job, “ I have uttered things which I “ understood not; things too wonderful for “ me, which I knew not.” “ I will lay my “ hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, “ but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I “ will proceed no farther.” “ Yea, truly, “ every mouth shall be stopped, and all the “ world shall appear guilty before God; “ yea, shall be speechless when ordered to “ be cast into outer darkness, where is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.”—What cause then have all to repent, who have justly merited so dreadful a punishment.

V. All have cause of, and need for, repentance; because God will most certainly inflict this punishment upon all the impenitent with unabating severity. “ Except you “ repent, you shall all likewise perish.” Let no man deceive you with vain words: the impenitent sinner shall certainly spend eternity in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. An awakening truth, which satan and his instruments have in all ages been

been opposing; but in none more zealously, ingeniously, and, alas! successfully, than in this: for that great deceiver knows that nothing so effectually increases the number of the damned, as the disbelief of eternal damnation. "Ye shall not surely die," was the first temptation of this murderer of souls: and still his kingdom is supported by the same insinuations. But if there be any meaning in words, if the idea of eternal torments can be conveyed in human language, and if the bible be the word of God, then the wicked "shall go away into EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT." Though God be rich in mercy, though there be plenteous redemption in the blood of Christ; yet neither the mercy of God, nor the blood of Christ, belong to any but the penitent: to others, all the threatnings of the law alone belong; nor have they any part or lot in the gospel, except the deeper condemnation of neglecting such great salvation; and abusing the mercy of God, and the redemption of Christ, into an encouragement to continue in sin. Such sinners "are a people, who
 " have no understanding, therefore he that
 " made them will have no mercy on them."
 " Oh consider this, ye that forget God, lest
 " he tear you in pieces, and there be none
 " to deliver *."

* Psalm l. 22.

VI. The necessity of repentance is further evinced, by considering the reasonableness of this awful determination. There is a controversy betwixt God and sinners, and blame must rest somewhere. Either God is indeed chargeable with blame for enacting so strict a law, and annexing so dreadful a penalty on transgressors; or the sinner is as much to blame as this penalty implies, for breaking the law. To harbour one moment the supposition that any part of the blame belongs to God is blasphemous; doubtless the whole fault belongs to the sinner. Yet every impenitent sinner, in excusing himself, condemns God. "Wilt thou," saith he to Job, "disannul judgment? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayst be righteous?" Job xl. 8.—Why did the sinner break the law, if he did not think it too strict? Doth he *pretend* it was by surprize, or sudden temptation, through inadvertency, and not deliberate rebellion †? Then why doth he not repent? His impenitence for the past; his present continuance in transgression, strongly imply a most injurious censure of the law, as inconsistent with his happiness: his vindi-

† This is often the case of the true believer, who delights in the law of God, and hates evil, yet is surprized into the commission of that which he abhors, and breaks the law he loves; but recovering from the surprize, he directly and deeply repents. But this excuse is merely a pretence in others, whereby they cover a rooted enmity to the law, and habitual love of sin; and their impenitence detects their hypocrisy.

cation of himself and conduct, implies a censure on the justice of God in condemning sinners, equally injurious.

But should God pardon a sinner who thus excuses himself, and tacitly condemns him, he would seem to allow the excuse, and plead guilty to the charge; so that the honour of God, and the salvation of an impenitent sinner, are irreconcilable contradictions: but God, conscious of his own most perfect justice, and jealous of his own glory, would sooner leave all the world to perish for ever, than thus consent to his own dishonour.—Every hope which any man entertains of pardon in impenitency, involves the absurd supposition, when carefully investigated, that God will dishonour himself to humour and favour a proud obstinate rebel. Every such hope is pregnant with the presumption spoken of in Deut. xxix. 18—20. “Lest there be
 “among you a root that beareth gall, and
 “wormwood; and it cometh to pass, when
 “he heareth the words of this curse, that he
 “bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall
 “have peace, tho’ I walk after the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to
 “thirst. The Lord will not spare him, but
 “then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man; and
 “all the curses that are written in this book
 “shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot
 “out his name from under heaven.” Let

us, beloved, attend carefully to such plain warnings of the word of God, that we may thereby be armed against the temptations of satan, and the rising presumptions of our own heart.

VII. The necessity of repentance further is manifested by reflecting, that no impenitent sinner can cordially approve of the salvation revealed in the word of God. Indeed, did the gospel require men confidently to believe that *their* sins were already pardoned, and that all the blessings of salvation were already *their's*, tho' destitute of every gracious disposition, as some have incautiously advanced; no scheme could better suit the pride and carnality of an impenitent heart. But this is not the true gospel of Christ, but another gospel, which must be opposed, even though preached by an angel from heaven. All are bound to believe that God will forgive the vilest of sinners, who repent, and believe in Christ: otherwise they make God a liar; for he hath attested it. When by scripture evidence (even by holy dispositions produced, and holy actions performed) I am sure that *my* faith is living, and *my* repentance genuine, I may be humbly sure, that *my* sins are forgiven, and that *I* am a child of God, and an heir of glory; but not before. That I shall be welcome, if I come aright, I may be sure before I come: that I have come aright, and am accepted, I can

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only be assured, by the effects I am conscious of, and the fruits of righteousness produced.

The way in which forgiveness and salvation is actually conferred upon sinners, may be thus illustrated. A state criminal, under sentence of death, is thus addressed by his prince: " You deserve to suffer the rigour
 " of your sentence ; no excuse can be made
 " for your rebellion, nor one alleviating circumstance found in your case : yet, by
 " my own clemency, I am disposed to shew
 " mercy, so that I may but do it honourably,
 " and so, as effectually to express my dis-
 " approbation of your crime, for an example
 " to others. I will therefore seat myself,
 " upon my royal throne, surrounded by my
 " nobles, and multitudes of my subjects, as
 " witnesses of your submission, and my clemency. Do you then approach and profess
 " your guilt in my presence, publicly,
 " and humbly confess your guilt, acknowledge you justly merit to be immediately
 " led to execution, then throw yourself upon
 " my royal mercy, and crave your life at my
 " hands. In this humbling method, and in no
 " other, will I forgive your crimes, and become your friend." I speak not here of that redemption price which Immanuel paid, that God might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth : but merely of the glory of God's justice in our condemnation, and of his mercy in our salvation, which he
 requires

requires to be unreservedly and cordially acknowledged by every one, who comes to him for pardon.

But an impenitent sinner always rejects, and generally is affronted with this preliminary to the treaty of peace and reconciliation. He stands upon his vindication, and holds fast his pleas and excuses. If he allow that, he hath his faults : he insists that he hath his virtues, and expects that they should be accepted by way of compensation. He hopes also to do something more by way of atoning for his faults ; and thinks it would be hard, and indeed palpably unjust, to send him with all his imagined good qualities, sincere obedience, and good intentions, to keep company with thieves, murderers, and prostitutes, in the bottomless pit. Such indeed is the self-love and self-partiality of mankind, that you shall find few, if any, of so vile a character, who have not something of this kind to plead in arrest of judgment : every one's own faults seem trifling, and their good qualities and actions extraordinary ; and thus every sinner " flatters himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be " found to be hateful." But especially this is the grand objection of the rich, the moral, and the pharisaical. These would bid high and do much, yea, almost any thing but this, which is so intolerably mortifying to their self-preference. Upon this many part

with Christ, as he will shew mercy in no other way: "for there is no difference; for "all have sinned," all are condemned, none can make satisfaction; all then that are saved, must condemn themselves, and consent to be saved by grace alone, through faith in the Son of God. Whilst therefore such proudly hesitate and object, the publicans and harlots, being brought to true repentance, approve of this humbling method, and enter into the kingdom of heaven before them.

VIII. Without repentance there can be no preparation of heart for that "holiness, without which no man can see the Lord." All true christians, though they depend not upon, are zealous of, good works, "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Far enough is the christian from perfection in good works, and therefore he cannot be justified by them: but by his sincere obedience, his unreserved and universal observation of Christ's commands, he gives evidence that he is a true believer and no hypocrite, glorifies God, adorns the gospel, and promotes the real good of mankind.

But by deep repentance alone is the heart prepared for such a holy conduct. Without this there can be no ceasing to do evil, or learning to do well; no hating the evil, and loving the good; no fleeing from evil, or
cleaving

cleaving to that which is good. Without repentance we cannot really love God, desire his glory, reverence his majesty, or delight in his law and service. Mere moral and relative good behaviour in the world, without any due regard to God; or mere external performances in religion, may subsist without repentance: but that holiness, which respects the authority of God, as law-giver and judge, which springs from love of him and his commandments, and gratitude for his mercies, and is intentionally directed to his glory, can only be produced from a heart renewed unto repentance.

Especially that deep sense of personal unworthiness, which is peculiar to the true penitent, prepares the heart to exercise genuine gratitude, contentment, patience, meekness, forgiveness of injuries, and love of enemies. These dispositions and duties form a very conspicuous part of the christian character, as delineated in the sacred scriptures: but no impenitent man can really exercise these graces, or perform these duties, whatever appearances he may occasionally assume. Yet if this be not our character and conduct, our hope is mere presumption, our profession hypocrisy: “for if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses.” So that without repentance

no man can serve God here, or be saved in the world to come.

Lastly. Without repentance, there can be no meetness for a holy heaven. Without a correspondent disposition, without an appetite prepared for the object, there can be no gratification. A holy heart relishes and delights in holiness, and is thus prepared for the enjoyment of a holy heaven. But he, who despises and disrelishes holiness in this world, could find no happiness even there, where all the joys are holy; and where, consequently, all the employments would be irksome to him. But no impenitent sinner has this "meetness for the inheritance of " the saints in light:" he cannot relish and delight in holiness; for were this any man's disposition, he must in proportion abhor unholiness, and abhor himself for his sinfulness; that is, repent of sin. Therefore no impenitent sinner can be fit for heaven, but all such must be adjudged "vessels of wrath " fitted for destruction."

Furthermore, the whole company of the redeemed are represented as joining in cordial and unreserved praises unto God and the Lamb; giving all the glory of their salvation to the rich mercy of the Father, and the precious blood of the Saviour. These praises imply an acknowledgment of the justice of the sentence executed upon the ungodly: nay, they imply that *they* themselves

selves might justly, and should certainly have perished with their fellow rebels, had not Jesus interposed with his atoning blood. But could an impenitent sinner join this worship with sincere delight? Many on earth openly arraign the conduct of the Judge in dooming sinners to eternal misery: every impenitent heart is disposed to quarrel with this part of the divine conduct. Nor would the case be different, were such a person in heaven: he would secretly condemn his Maker for his severity, in eternally punishing others for the very crimes he himself hath committed, and never repented of: he must dissent from those praises in his heart, which arise from a principle he allows not; namely, that distinguishing grace and atoning blood have made all the difference betwixt him and those in hell: he could not, in sincerity, allow, that God would have been glorious, though he had left him to perish. But there is neither hypocrisy, nor discordant voice, nor unholiness, in these happy mansions; therefore no impenitent sinner shall ever enter into them.

Because our self-love renders us so unwilling to believe this important truth; because Satan with such artifice endeavours to draw off our attention from it; because we are so reluctant of ourselves duly to consider it: and because the entangling pursuits and interests, the pleasures, maxims, and examples of

of the world, have such a tendency to lull us into a fatal security in this respect; I have the more importunately laboured these multiplied demonstrations of the necessity of repentance. Surely, sinner, I have gained my point, fixed thy attention, and fully convinced thee, that thou hast cause to repent, oughtest to repent, and must either repent, or perish. Surely thy heart is by this time in some measure suitably affected with the important subject; and thou art even now, with pressing anxiety, enquiring, “What then is repentance?” Beseeching the Lord to assist and bless the attempt, I shall endeavour, with all possible seriousness and plainness, to satisfy this enquiry.

PART THE SECOND.

The Nature of REPENTANCE.

I Shall not spend my time in critically enquiring into the etymology, or meaning of the words, which we translate repentance in our version of the bible. Suffice it to observe, that μεταμελεια, one of the words which are most commonly used, signifies “an after carefulness;” and the other μετάνοια, “a change of mind,” of judgment, and disposition: which ideas severally and conjunctly express the nature of repentance, as it may more fully be learned from the general tenor of the scriptures. I would then define true repentance to be, a genuine sorrow for sin;—attended with a real inclination to undo, if it were possible, all we have sinfully done; and consequently an endeavour as far as we have it in our power, to counteract the evil consequences of our former evil conduct; with a determination of mind, through divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life, evidenced to be sincere by fruits meet for repentance; that is, by all holy dispositions, words, and actions. Enlarging on this definition will give me an opportunity of expressing my sentiments on the nature of real repentance, and

and distinguishing it from various counterfeits.

I. Repentance comprehends a *genuine sorrow for sin*. This part of the definition implies that there is a counterfeit sorrow on account of sin, which a man may have to excess without any real repentance. This sorrow arises from self-love, alarmed with the fear of punishment, without regard to the just desert of it. Such a man is sorry (not that he hath sinned, but) that God doth so exceedingly hate sin, is determined to punish it so terribly, and is able to execute this determination in spite of all opposition. He is extremely sorry that the law is so very strict, and greatly terrified when he reflects on the danger to which he stands exposed: but he is not grieved at heart for the odious ungrateful part he hath acted. In human affairs, many under condemnation of death appear thus penitent, whose insincerity is detected by a pardon, and they rush upon the commission of new crimes. Many such penitents we meet with upon sick beds, or in circumstances of imminent danger: they are under excessive terrors, shed abundance of tears, and make many fair promises: but when the fright is over, their repentance is repented of, and their concern is lost in company and worldly pursuits. Many such penitents likewise are found amongst the hearers of the gospel, who,
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Felix like, have a short fit of trembling, perhaps of weeping, but are soon comforted: many of these embrace false and loose schemes of religion, are bolstered up with presumptuous hopes, and *practically* say, "let us sin" on that grace may abound." Having done with their alarm, their repentance is finished; they live without remorse for the past, or tenderness of conscience for the present: nor have they any trouble in general about their sins; except perchance some outrage to common decency shame them before their fellow-sinners.

This false kind of repentance is most effectually made use of by satan to keep men from true repentance. A general persuasion prevails, that we ought to repent, though men seldom understand either the real cause for, or the nature of repentance. However this general persuasion causes, from time to time, considerable uneasiness of mind and trouble of conscience to that man who considers himself impenitent. But when men falsely imagine they have repented, or do repent, this uneasiness ceases, and they continue impenitent with a quiet conscience. Hath it not been thus? Is it not thus with thee, reader? Dost thou not keep thy conscience from reproaching thee by some general apprehension that thou art at times a penitent? I beseech thee leave not this consideration till thou hast carefully examined, as in God's sight, and with the day of judgment before
thine

thine eyes. Certain it is, that multitudes live all their lives in a continued course of sinning, and repenting in this way; and at length die impenitent.

But a man may be *really* sorry for some particular sins, which he hath committed, without being a true penitent. Conscience doth sometimes so reproach men for some enormous violations of all laws, human and divine, as to render them a terror to themselves: yea, they are sorry at heart that they ever committed that particular villainy, and would gladly undo it, were it possible: yet, hath this nothing of the nature of true repentance in it. Thus Judas repented of betraying Christ, confessed his guilt, made restitution, and would have undone it: yea, he was so stung with remorse, that he could not live under the anguish, but became his own executioner. Yet, was he not a true penitent; for the Lord assures us, "It had been good for that man had he never been born." Nor do we find he ever expressed the least remorse for his hypocrisy, covetousness, or other wickedness of heart and life, which he had continued in all his days. The case is oft the same with murderers, who are unspeakably troubled for one act of violence to a fellow-creature; but not in the least concerned for all the contempt, ingratitude, and enmity they have been guilty of towards God. And the same is often observable in respect of
 3 many

many other notorious offenders. This sorrow is not excited by the consciousness of having done wrong in offending a good God, and breaking a good law : but arises from the horror of having done violence to natural light, and their own consciences, to that degree, that none of their former *excuses and pretences* can pacify them. God having preserved thus much of himself, and his law in our reason and conscience, as a check upon natural depravity, and to bridle therewith the headstrong corruptions of those who fear not him, nor regard men ; yet cannot act out all their evil purposes without becoming their own tormentors.

But the sorrow of the true penitent is for sin, as committed against God, being rebellion against his rightful authority, and transgression of his holy law. " Against thee, " thee only have I sinned, and done this " evil in thy sight *." He mourns after a godly sort, with a godly sorrow, or a sorrow which directly regards God. 2 Cor. vii. 9. His sorrow springs from the consideration of the majesty, purity, and excellency of that glorious being whom he hath offended ; the reasonableness of the law which he hath transgressed ; the obligations to obedience which he hath violated ; the injustice and ingratitude of which he hath been guilty ; and the complicated odiousness of his conduct. As

* Psalm li. 4.

every sin partakes of the same nature, and implies the same disregard to God, he mourns for all, and every one; whether man were thereby injured, or not; whether it were secret or open; omission of duty, or commission of some forbidden action: whether it were or were not contrary to the notions, maxims, customs, and allowance of the world. Yea, every sinful temper, imagination, or inclination; every idle unprofitable word; every evil action of his whole life, as upon examination it recurs to his remembrance, excites afresh his godly sorrow. The more he recollects the numberless instances of God's unwearied patience and kindness towards him in former years; the more he mourns over his own forgetfulness, ingratitude, and disobedience: the more he is enlightened to see the glory of God, the more hateful all sin appears, and the more he mourns over his own offences.

As therefore the glory of the divine character shines forth more illustriously from the person and sufferings of Jesus, than from all his other works: the true penitent's sorrow will be more or less intense, in proportion to the degree of his spiritual apprehensions and realizing views of that great event. When with fixed attention he can meditate on the divine surety for sinners agonizing in the garden and expiring on the cross; when he can realize to his mind in the exercise of faith,

who

who he was that suffered; and what he endured from the cruelty and insult of men, the power and malice of satan, and the avenging justice of the Father: and wherefore he suffered; that he might bear our sins, and expiate our guilt: then in especial manner his mind is deeply impressed with admiring views of the awful holiness and justice, and the unfathomable love and compassion of God: then doth sin appear to his mind peculiarly odious, as committed against a God of such a lovely and loving character: then doth he appear abominable in his own eyes, and mourns for his sins with peculiar humiliation. They now become a sore burthen, too heavy for him to bear; he goes mourning for them all the day long; yet mourns that he can mourn no more; is ashamed that he is no more affected; and abhors himself for the remaining hardness of his heart.

Now no longer doth he vindicate his conduct, or extenuate his crimes: his mouth is stopped, his guilt is manifest, and he condemns himself. Now his judgment of his own character is totally changed: he used to admire and approve, now he abhors and loaths himself: he was disposed to exalt himself, now he becomes more and more disposed to self-abasement. Then turning his thoughts inward, he traces back the streams of sin, which have polluted his life, to that fountain of iniquity in his heart, from whence they

sprang. "Behold," says he, "I was shapen
 " in iniquity, and in sin did my mother con-
 " ceive me *." Thus abased in himself and
 impressed with an awful sense of the holy
 majesty of God, he would despond, yea, at
 length, absolutely despair, were he not sup-
 ported by discoveries of the rich mercy of
 God, and the precious salvation of the gospel.
 Thus encouraged, he ventures to speak unto
 the Lord; but 'tis in the publican's humble
 frame of spirit, and humble words: "God
 " be merciful to me a sinner."

This deep humiliation of soul renders a man
 backward to conclude his repentance genuine,
 his faith sincere, and his sins forgiven. The
 blessing appears in his eyes so large, his own
 character so vile, and his humiliation so small,
 in comparison with what he is conscious it
 ought to be, that he can hardly raise his hopes
 so high: and he is so aware of the wickedness
 of his heart, and hears so much of Satan's ar-
 tifice, that he fears being imposed upon by
 a false peace, where so very much is at stake.
 But when this hope springs up in his heart,
 and he is persuaded that "it is the hope
 " that maketh not ashamed, because the love
 " of God is shed abroad in his heart by the
 " Holy Ghost given unto him:" this is so
 far from drying up his tears, and concluding
 his repentance, that it vastly enlarges and
 purifies his godly sorrow; yet now attended

* Psalm li. 5.

with a sweetness far exceeding all earthly joy. The fuller assurance he possesseth that Jesus "was wounded for *his* transgressions, " and was bruised for *his* iniquities," the more he abhors his sins and loaths himself. Here he sees with personal application what wrath sin merited ! what punishment he was worthy of ! When a God of such immense compassion would not pardon one sin, without such a satisfaction : yea, would rather not spare his own Son, but be pleased to bruise him in whom his soul delighted ; than either leave sin unpunished or sinful men to perish.

His own concern in this transaction directs his attention peculiarly to it. " The Father " loved *him*, and gave his beloved Son to " die for *him* : Christ loved *him*, and gave " himself for him, and interceded for him : " and thus *he* was spared and borne with all the years of his rebellion ; whilst many others were cut off in their sins. At length God, who was rich in mercy, for his great " love, " wherewith he loved him, even when dead " in sins, quickened him by his Spirit : " thus born of God, he was pardoned and justified, and adopted into God's family, and numbered amongst the heirs of eternal glory ; to which he is sealed by, and has the earnest of, in the graces and consolations of the Holy Ghost. Such discoveries and prospects, elevate the soul to a degree of adoring love and

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gratitude,

gratitude, before unknown; and this increases still more his self-abasement and godly sorrow. His heart is even broken, and as it were melted, when he considers the number and odiousness of the crimes committed against this glorious and gracious God, who was all the while full of love to him. His character is stamped, "a mourner that shall be comforted:" yet his is a sweet sorrow; whilst with tears of contrition and gratitude, he praises a pardoning God and a bleeding Saviour: he realizes the paradox, "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing:" except that in some dark seasons his heart is insensible, both to the motions of godly sorrow, and of holy joy. These alternate variations in the frame of his spirit the true christian experiences through the remainder of his life. His more melting seasons of godly sorrow are blended with, and prepare the way for his sweetest consolations: which again increase and purify his mourning for sin; seeing then he most clearly sees what a gracious and glorious God he hath offended, and how vile he hath been. Thus ingenuous sorrow, and holy joy reciprocally assist each other; intermingle with each other; and are proportioned to each other in his daily experience: till at length death closes the varied scene. Then God wipes away all tears from his eyes; the days of his mourning are ended, he shall eternally be comforted, and plenteously reap that harvest which here he sowed in tears. I mean
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not to determine any thing of the exact degree in which true penitents obtain these spiritual discoveries, or experience these flowing affections and melting frames. 'Tis enough, if we can describe the distinguishing nature of true repentance. True grace is of the same nature and tendency, whether any particular christian have much or little of it. The more of true grace in general, or of true repentance in particular, any man hath, the more evident and satisfactory it will be.

If the true scriptural sorrow for sin hath been described, it is no objection to say, that many christians have very little of these views and affections: because that is only to say, in other words, that they have but little true repentance: or which amounts to the same thing, have but little true grace. And the less they have of these things, the less evident their conversion: and the more need have "they to examine themselves, whether " they be in the faith:" and the more need to give diligence to make their calling and election sure. Certainly we must not adulterate the word of God, that we may accommodate it to the experience of lukewarm professors in this our day, when iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. This would be the way to reduce things from bad to worse, till true religion were vanished from amongst us. We must still keep to the
standard

standard of God's word, and the experience of scripture saints, and the sample of primitive christians, endeavouring to stir up men's minds to imitate these illustrious examples. Such I hope, on careful examination, the above description of godly sorrow will be found: all real christians have experienced somewhat of this kind, yea habitually experience it: and the more distinct their views, the more enlarged their affections, and the deeper their contrition; the more evidently they are true penitents, and entitled to all the consolations belonging to such.

Nor is the order in which these things are experienced at all material, provided the godly sorrow be of the proper nature and tendency: yet I would just observe, that at all times it is begun before assured hope of salvation; otherwise pardon and the *assurance of it* would be vouchsafed to impenitent sinners: yet it is much enlarged by this assurance, wherever it is scripturally possessed; as the believer now looks "upon him whom he hath pierced, and mourns." It begins previous to the sense of pardoning love, and is perfected thereby; because thereby the believer's love to the Lord is increased, and this increases sorrow for having offended him. Let this be well digested, and then let us proceed to observe that,

II. Repentance is attended with a real inclination to undo, if it were possible, all that

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we have sinfully done; and consequently with an endeavour, as far as we have it in our power, to counteract the evil consequences of our former evil conduct. This frame of spirit will manifest itself,

(1.) By ingenuous confession of our sins to the glory of that God, whom by sin we have dishonoured. Thus Joshua exhorts Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord." How? "Make confession unto him." The commission of sin impeaches the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God; and seems to say, that he hath forbid us somewhat conducive to our real happiness. Obstinacy in sin defies his power, dares his vengeance, and despises his truth and holiness. To vindicate ourselves, and cover our sins, arraigns the righteousness of his threatnings and judgments, or affronts his omniscience. Thus the sinner robs God of his glory. What he hath done cannot be undone: nor hath he it in his Power to make satisfaction for the injustice he hath been guilty of, except he bear the eternal punishment. Convinced of this, the true penitent flees for refuge to the atoning blood of Jesus. But, though he cannot make satisfaction for his own sins, or do any thing towards meriting his own pardon, or reward; this he knows must be wholly of free mercy: yet what he can do, he will. He will, both in secret and openly, on all proper occasions, make full and unreserved confession of his crimes; condemn himself:

himself : and thus glorify God's justice and mercy ; glorify his law, as the ministration of condemnation ; and his gospel, as the ministration of righteousness : for " both " are glorious, though the latter exceed in " glory." 2 Cor. iii. 9. As all, who have a superficial acquaintance with the bible, know that this is every where spoken of as an essential part of true repentance, and often put for the whole of it, I shall not further dwell upon it, but shall confine myself to two observations. First, that secret sins require only secret confession unto that God, who knoweth and seeth in secret : but public scandals require public acknowledgments ; that we may publicly honour God by our confession, whom we have dishonoured openly in our conduct. Thus when David had by adultery and murder given cause to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme ; by penning and publishing the fifty-first psalm, he publicly took shame to himself, gave glory unto God, and stopped the blasphemy of the ungodly. Secondly, that the true penitent, though general in his public confessions, should be, and will be very particular in his secret confession ; reviewing, enumerating, and bemoaning all his sins, of every sort, with all their various aggravations.

(2.) This disposition of mind will influence the penitent to make ample restitution to those whom he hath defrauded or injured. Under the ceremonial law, the trespass-

pass-offering was to be accompanied by re-
 titution to the injured party. Lev. vi. 1—7.
 The plain meaning of which institution
 Christ hath given us in his sermon on the
 mount. “If thou bring thy gift unto the
 “altar, and there remember that thy brother
 “hath ought against thee; leave there thy
 “gift before the altar, and go thy ways:
 “*first* be reconciled to thy brother, and then
 “come and offer thy gift.” Thus it was
 that Zaccheus evidenced the sincerity of his
 repentance: and thus every sincere convert,
 with self-indignation, will haste to be rid of
 that accursed thing dishonest gain*: with
 scrupulousness will he make diligent search
 for every remainder of it: with interest will
 he restore it to the injured, if he can; if not,
 to their relatives, and to the poor: and if
 he have not the ability (which he will put
 himself to much inconvenience and much
 self-denial rather than want) it will be long
 the occasion of additional trouble of mind.—
 Professor, hast thou well considered this part
 of repentance? Hast thou impartially ex-
 amined thyself on this score? Hast thou
 imitated Zaccheus in this matter? Or art
 thou sure thou hast no cause, having never
 injured any man by fraud, violence, or ex-
 tortion? I warn thee beforehand, that God
 will bring to light these hidden things of
 darkness, and fully investigate this matter,
 at the day of Judgment. And no * *unrighteous*

* Who shaketh his hands from holding of bribes. Isai. xxxiii. 15.

† 1 Cor. vi. 9.

persons, who, having injured their neighbours, love the gains of iniquity so well as to refuse restitution, shall inherit the kingdom of God. This evidence of sincerity is so distinguishing, that I cannot but conclude, judging by the bible, that all appearances of repentance, all pretences to experience without this, are hypocritical and delusory. What shall we say then to many persons, who having formerly, under colour of law, been *perhaps* unwillingly injurious to their creditors, still keep them out of their just rights: perhaps see them struggling with those difficulties into which their extravagance hath plunged them: whilst they themselves now live at ease, perhaps in affluence: and are well able, if they could prevail with themselves, to retrench superfluous expences, to make them restitution in whole, or in part: but will not, because not constrained by law? Such persons confound human laws with doing the will of God; and prefer wealth, indulgence, and the pride of life, to the golden rule of “doing unto others as they would they should do unto them.” Whatever profession of religion such a man makes, his religion is vain: and a discourse upon repentance would be exceedingly defective, which did not bear testimony against this common and flagrant conduct. Another evil, I am told, very common amongst professors, is dealing in smuggled, or contraband goods. This trade is in itself,—

1. An evident violation of Rom. xiii. 6, 7.

and other scriptures. 2. A robbery upon the community, which must be taxed, to make up the deficiency. 3. Aiding and abetting all the enormities that smugglers commit. But necessity is pretended. I suppose it is necessary, in order to be rich. "But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into divers foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition: For the love of money, is the root of all evil, &c." 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

But our evil conduct may injure others, not only in their property, but in their reputation, in their connexions, in their peace of mind, and many other ways: and the true penitent, though he cannot undo what is past; yet will endeavour to counteract the mischief, at the expence of stooping to the most humiliating submissions, of making the frankest acknowledgments; or by any method in his power, however contrary to the pride and self-love of the human heart.

(3.) This disposition of mind will induce a man to retract those false principles which he hath advanced, that may have a tendency to propagate or countenance infidelity or profaneness: and to counteract the consequence of his evil conduct, where it hath prejudiced men's minds against religion, or induced or emboldened them to sinful practices; or any ways tended to the dishonour of God, and the ruin of men's souls. Gladly would he

undo this part of his conduct : it ever grieves him upon reflection : he is pained that the seed is sown, and springs up and grows in spite of all his endeavours to the contrary. But so far as his retraction, his arguments, his persuasions, example, and influence, can reach, he will endeavour to prevent the further progress of the mischief. In these, and various other particulars, true repentance influences a man sincerely to desire, and endeavour to counteract the tendency of his former evil conduct : but appearances of humiliation for sin may be and often are without this distinguishing effect. Thus Ahab humbled himself, and was clothed in sackcloth, but neither restored Naboth's vineyard, nor ceased to commit iniquity.

III. True repentance is attended with a determination of mind, through divine grace, to walk for the future in newness of life ; evidenced to be sincere, by fruits meet for repentance : that is, by all holy dispositions, words, and actions.

This is at last the grand distinction betwixt true repentance, and all false appearances. Tho' men be abundant in shedding tears, make the most humiliating confessions, or most ample restitution : tho' they openly retract their false principles, and are zealous in promoting true religion : tho' they relate the most plausible story of experiences, and profess to be favoured with the most glorious manifestations : tho' they have strong confidence,

dence, and high affection, and orthodox sentiments, and exact judgment, and extensive knowledge : yet, except they do works meet for repentance, all the rest is nothing ; they are yet in their sins. For the tree is known by the fruit ; and “ every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” Yea, though Cain’s terror, Judas’s confession and restitution, Pharaoh’s fair promises, Ahab’s humiliation, Herod’s reverencing the prophet, hearing him gladly, and doing many things : the stony ground hearer’s joy : together with the tongue of men and angels, the gifts of miracles and prophecies, and the knowledge of all mysteries, were combined in one man ; they would not prove him a true penitent, so long as the love of one lust remains unmortified in his heart, or the practice of it *allowed* in his life.

Unless the drunkard become habitually sober, and the churl learn to be liberal ; unless the contentious man learn meekness, and the proud humility : unless every man break off, and set himself to oppose and mortify his constitutional and customary iniquity ; there is no real repentance. The man’s mind is not changed respecting sin : he does not sincerely grieve that ever he committed it, nor really desire it undone : nor heartily abhor it, nor is willing to be finally divorced from it : not from his darling indulgence, his Dalilah, his Herodias ; however he be affected, alarmed, and restrained.

I deny not but the true penitent will find work enough all his life with his own peculiar evil propensities: and after all his watchfulness, and prayer, and determination of mind against all sin, will too often manifest (to his great sorrow) that his evil nature is not destroyed, that sin yet dwells within him: but he will also give abundant evidence that no sin hath dominion over him; that his own iniquity is peculiarly abhorred, dreaded, and opposed; and that, in short, "he is a new creature, old things are past away, behold all things are become new." This will not be so evident to others in his case, who was before a moral and decent character: but will be equally manifest to his own conscience: whilst he observes that he now acts from other principles, and to other ends, and by another rule than heretofore: and now has not only regard to those things with which man is acquainted; but abstains from secret sins, from sinful tempers, intentions, and imaginations, which are manifest unto God, with equal care and attention.

It appears then, beloved, that this necessary repentance is a very arduous business. Thus our Lord represents it: "Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Do you object the profit and pleasantness of your sins, and the pain of parting with them? He answers, "If thy right eye offend

“ offend thee, pluck it out : if thy right
 “ hand or foot offend thee, cut them off.
 “ For it is profitable for thee, thus maimed
 “ and mutilated, to enter into life ; rather
 “ than having two eyes, two hands, two
 “ feet, to be cast into hell, where the worm
 “ never dieth, and the fire is not quenched.”

When the difficulty is objected, the necessity is urged : the awful alternative ; repentance, or eternal damnation. But should any urge the impossibility ; he proposes the effectual assistance of Him, to whom all things are possible. An easy slothful religion may serve a man to live with : but only a diligent, self-denying religion will comfortably prepare a man to meet death. “ Except a man
 “ deny himself, take up his cross daily, and
 “ forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my
 “ disciple,” saith the loving Saviour of the world, the judge of the living and the dead : and because we are so backward to believe it, and so much depends upon believing it, he confirms it with a double asseveration —
 “ Verily, verily, I say unto you.”

But though the work be great, and require labour and self-denial, there is no cause for despondency ; the encouragements are proportionable ; the success certain to every one who is in good earnest about it ; and the work itself unspeakably more pleasant to the soul, than all the forbidden delights of sin.

PART THE THIRD.

Containing Encouragements to REPENTANCE.

I HAVE already intimated, that he, who is convinced of the necessity of repentance, in good earnest uses those means which God hath appointed, in order thereto, may depend upon the effectual assistance of the holy Spirit in this important undertaking, which will render it both practicable and pleasant. And the same topic will afterwards be resumed, when those means are treated of. I shall not here, therefore, farther speak upon that subject, but lead your attention to those encouragements, which arise from the assurance that repentance shall issue in salvation.

I. Then, “*God commandeth all men every where to repent.*” Were there any men any where who needed not repentance; or any to whom repentance would be unavailing, God would not have given such a commandment. As he determined not to spare angels who sinned, and determines not to forgive those who die in their sins, he doth not command them to repent. Having done wrong in sinning, doubtless they continue to do wrong in not repenting: and their impenitent rebellion, and enmity to God, will eternally illustrate his justice in their condemnation: as all will see, that he doth not treat them
without

without cause as enemies. A man who hath murdered his lawful prince, though the law must have it's course, ought to repent, and shews a still more desperate spirit of rebellion, if he die vindicating his conduct. Yet the avenger of blood, designing no mercy, requires no submission. Such a mandate as that before-mentioned, if sent to a company of condemned criminals, would directly excite a beam of hope in every relenting breast. God sends his ministers and word, commanding thee, sinner, to repent: were no more said, thou mightest safely draw this conclusion;—certainly he hath thoughts of peace, and intends to shew mercy to all, who obey the summons.

II. God is ever in scripture represented as peculiarly ready to receive and entertain repenting sinners. Consider, at your leisure, Jer. xxxi. 18—20. where we have the true penitent, mourning for sin, covered with shame, and crying for mercy; and the encouraging answer of that God, “who waiteth “to be gracious.” Then consider the experience of David in the 32d psalm: how soon the sweet sense of forgiving love followed his ingenuous confession of guilt.

But for the sake of brevity, omitting many other scriptures, let me detain you a little, in meditating on the prodigal son: a parable spoken on purpose to encourage the publicans and sinners, who listened to the words of Jesus. Let us attentively consider

his vile character ; his disdainful and ungrateful behaviour to his wife and indulgent father ; his debauched and dissolute life, and the misery he was reduced to. As in a glass, we may here see our own picture ; our pride and ingratitude, our contempt of God, and wilful departure from him, our folly, and our misery, whilst we live in sin. Next let us view him now *come to himself*, conscious of his guilt, sinking under his misery, covered with shame, adopting the resolution of returning to his offended father, with penitent confessions and humble supplications. Discouraged, as well as humbled, by the recollection of his vileness ; his only hope arises from meditating on the kindness of him, whom he had so basely offended : and he can just enough raise his mind above despondency to expect, that, perhaps after many repulses, and reiterated submissions, and entreaties, answered by deserved upbraidings, he might be at length prevailed on to admit him, in some mean capacity, to share that plenty his servants enjoyed. Here again we have the frame of spirit, the hopes, and fears of the true penitent most affectingly delineated. But behold the tender father is looking out with eager expectation for the return of his lost prodigal : he sees him afar off, and thro' parental tenderness and compassion, is regardless of his age and gravity, and runs to meet him. Finding that he abhorred and condemned himself, without one reproach, or the least delay, he welcomes him

as a son ; clothes, feasts, and rejoices over him, and commands all his servants to rejoice with him : “ because, says he, this my “ son was dead, and is alive ; was lost, and “ is found.”

Thus shall every true penitent be welcomed by a gracious God : not only shall he meet with a kinder reception than his fears foreboded : but his most sanguine expectations shall be far exceeded : his sins, however numerous, shall not once be mentioned against him : his wants shall be all supplied : pardon, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, shall be conferred on him : the robe of righteousness and salvation shall clothe him : angels in heaven shall rejoice more over him, than over ninety and nine Pharisees, who, in their own judgment, need no repentance : yea, God himself shall acknowledge him as his own child, and rejoice over him to do him good. Arise then, poor dejected sinner, and imitate this prodigal.

III. We have seen that repentance and forgiveness are connected in a great many texts of scripture which have been cited, and many others might be produced. But I would more especially call your attention to those encouraging promises which are expressly confined to those who are now exercising repentance, according to the explication of it which hath been given. It would be a needless prolixity to enumeratethe whole, or the most of these promises : a few exam-

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ples may suffice. " I will dwell with him that
 " is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive
 " the spirit of the humble, and to revive the
 " heart of the contrite ones." Isai. lvii. 15.
 " To this man will I look, even to him that
 " is poor and of a contrite heart, and that
 " trembleth at my word." Isai. lxvi. 2.
 " He looketh upon men, and if any say I
 " have sinned, I have perverted that which
 " is *right*, and it profiteth me not. He shall
 " deliver his soul from going down into the
 " pit, and his life shall see the light." Job
 xxxiii. 27, 28. " He that confesseth, and
 " forsaketh his sin, shall find mercy." " If
 " we say that we have no sin, we deceive
 " ourselves, and the truth is not in us: but
 " if we confess our sins, God is faithful, and
 " just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse
 " us from all unrighteousness." 1 John i. 9.
 Let but the broken-hearted sinner well con-
 sider these few citations, and plead them in
 prayer, thro' the intercession of Jesus, and
 he will find them full of consolation. Then
 let him search the scriptures, and he will ob-
 serve that no one character is so particularly
 encouraged as that of the penitent; under
 the titles of mourners, poor in spirit, con-
 trite, humble, and such others, as are in-
 cluded in the explanation that hath been
 given of true repentance. These things
 abundantly prove, that none but true peni-
 tents share the blessings, or are entitled to
 the consolations of gospel salvation: and
 that no degree of aggravated guilt can ex-
 clude

clude any such repenting sinner from the participation of the one and the enjoyment of the other.

But let not any from hence conclude, that these privileges are properly the rewards of repentance: or that it atones for our crimes. This would supersede the necessity of the expiatory sufferings of Jesus; and militate with St. Paul's express declaration, "that we are justified *by faith alone*, through the "righteousness of Christ;" and consequently infer, "that Christ died in vain." Were our repentance self-wrought, and perfect in it's nature, and in it's fruits, it could not avail for our justification, in any degree. It is observable, that even they who speak of atoning for our transgressions of the divine law by repentance, change their language when they have occasion to treat of the laws of human governments: you seldom hear them speak of a traitor or murderer making atonement for his crimes by repentance, but by his death. This sacrifice to justice the law demands: this alone expiates the offence: and if a criminal, however penitent or disposed to future obedience, escape punishment; the law is dispensed with, justice is relaxed, and no atonement made. But God's justice is perfect, and can admit of no relaxation; his law must be magnified and made honourable, and cannot be dispensed with. Not the repentance, but the eternal punishment of the offender is the atonement indispensably insisted upon, or

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one equally honourable to the precept, and sanction of the divine law. This the true penitent perceives and allows; subscribes the sentence of his own condemnation, and humbly trusts in that vicarious atonement which the Son of God once made, and which is of infinite value and efficacy; and through which God is just, and the justifier of the believer. That repentance which is depended on for justification, is a proud unbelieving repentance, and not that humble repentance treated of.

But in truth repentance, where it is genuine, is not self-wrought, but the gift of God, according to St. Paul: "If peradventure God *will give* them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; that they may recover themselves from the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will." 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26. Christ is exalted to bestow it; and the pouring out of * the Spirit of grace produces it. Tho' we have so much cause for repentance, and *are in duty* bound to repent: yet our proud, carnal hearts are naturally destitute of the least disposition or inclination to this duty. The shame therefore of our obstinate impenitency belongs to us: but the whole glory of our repentance, when his grace disposes and enables us to repent, is due to him, "who worketh in us to will, and do of his good pleasure." So far then are we from meriting

* Zech. xiii. 10.

any thing of God by repenting, that we are laid under fresh obligations to him, who hath granted us repentance unto life. “ Do not err, my beloved brethren, every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights.” Yet, on the other hand, let us not regard those who represent our natural want of inclination, as if it were an excuse for impenitency: not considering that the dominion of pride, and of the love of sin in the heart (which renders us incapable of our duty) forms itself the very essence of that impenitent heart, which God abhors, and will condemn: and cannot therefore be it’s own excuse. Nor is the most penitent person in the world perfect in his repentance. No man hates sin in a degree equal to it’s hatefulness: no man condemns, abases, and abhors himself, so much as he ought to do; or so much as he would; did he more perfectly behold the glory of God, the excellency of the law, the evil of sin, and the multitude of his own transgressions: or had he more realizing and fixed views of the nature and glory of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. He that is habitually most penitent, finds his repentance capable of increase, when his views are enlarged, and his heart is peculiarly affected with these discoveries: but even in these seasons, his enlarged godly sorrow is little in comparison to what it ought to be, and would be, did he, instead of “ seeing through a glass darkly, “ see face to face.” How far then doth the

more general frame of his spirit, when his mind is comparatively dark and unaffected, come short of the perfection of repentance ! Over this the sincere soul mourns, and of this seeks forgiveness.

Nor can his fruits of repentance do any thing towards atoning for his sins, meriting a reward as of debt, or justifying him before God. Take a familiar illustration. You owe your tradesman a sum of money : and you now continue to deal with him for ready money only : yet the old debt is not thereby diminished. But should you daily purchase to the value of a crown, and only pay daily one shilling, your debt would rapidly increase. Perfect obedience is no more than God's due : after we have by sin for years run in arrears with him, did we obey for all the remainder of a long life as perfectly as an arch-angel, our love and obedience would be no more than his due for the present, and could do just nothing towards discharging the old account : even with Paul's obedience the debt would rapidly increase. And sure I am, whilst I now write, that I am this moment more deeply deserving of condemnation than ever heretofore ; because (tho' I hope sincerely penitent) to my former sins, I daily add recent transgressions. And therefore I shall certainly perish, if Jesus do not plead for me, " Deliver him from going " down into the pit—behold the ransom."

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This salvation, thro' the ransom and intercession of the Son of God, every true penitent cordially approves, and thankfully embraces ; and therefore shall certainly participate. My brethren, an impenitent believer, or a penitent unbeliever, are ideal characters, which have no existence but in some men's imagination : except where the repentance is counterfeit, and the faith dead. These are twin graces, produced together, thrive together, and forward each other's growth. True ; some exercises of faith precede, and produce repentance in the regenerate soul : but repentance precedes, and makes way for that exercise of faith, which interests the soul in Christ's merits for salvation. For instance : the belief of the existence and perfections of God, his law and government ; our relations, obligations, and accountableness to him, of the future state, the day of judgment, heaven and hell, always precedes, and is influential in leading to repentance. A belief of several truths respecting Jesus Christ and his salvation, generally, tho' perhaps not always. But he must be already penitent in some degree, who can cordially approve of, and embrace that salvation : for whilst a man remains impenitent, his proud heart will have insuperable objections to it ; insuperable I say, in any other way, than by that change of judgment and disposition, which is denominated repentance.

The gospel salvation exalts God upon the throne, and requires the sinner to submit to

his authority and righteousness, and give him the whole glory of his salvation. This appears most equitable to the penitent above described, but to no other person. Let God be glorified, says he, by all in heaven and earth, whatsoever becomes of me : but should he mercifully save so vile and worthless a rebel, I shall be an eternal monument of the richness of his mercy, and the power of his grace. The gospel is intended to put honour upon the law. " It is holy, just, and good," says the penitent soul : I consent unto it that it is good, and I have deserved it's awful curse for my vile transgressions : I rejoice to see this holy law magnified in the obedience unto death of God incarnate : I long to have it written in my heart by the finger of the Spirit : and his prayer is, " O that my ways
 " were directed to keep thy righteous pre-
 " cepts." The gospel shews sin to be exceeding sinful, and discovers it's infinite odiousness and just demerit : the true penitent, and he alone, irreconcilably hates all sin, even that which was his own darling indulgence. The gospel abases the sinner, silences his excuses, rejects his pleas, strips him of his distinctions ; and, without regard to his learning, wisdom, wealth, honour, morality, or amiable character among men, treats him as a sinner condemned to die, deserving of, and fitted for, destruction. To this the true penitent, and he alone, cordially submits. " I
 " lothe, and abhor myself." " To me be-
 " longs

“ longs shame, and confusion of face ;” is the genuine expression of his humbled heart.

The gospel honours Christ, as the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the all in all. Thus he appears to the true penitent, and to none else. In his person, his undertaking, his righteousness, his atonement, his resurrection, his mediatorial exaltation, his offices, as king, priest, and prophet, his intercession, his instructions, example, and his Spirit of grace, he appears to the humbled sinner, altogether suitable, sufficient, and precious. On every other side despair lours : the glory of God, and the honour of the law demand his destruction. But here hope brightens ; here he sees God glorious, and sinners saved : here he sees every thing exactly suited to his wants, and his desires : here he may have his sins pardoned, his corruptions subdued, his ignorance removed, grace communicated, strength renewed, and every thing bestowed freely, without money, and without price ; which can raise him, from the brink of hell and the borders of despair, to the lively “ hope of an inheritance incorruptible, “ undefiled, and unfading.” Christ appears to him the pearl of great price, the chief among “ ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” He counts “ all things but loss for “ the excellency of the knowledge of him.” To him he flees, tho’ with trembling heart, lest he should meet with a repulse ; with

trembling hand he lays hold on this only hope; to him he cleaves in the midst of discouragements and delays, and answers every rising despondency, with, " Lord, to whom shall I go, thou hast the words of eternal life." Only impenitent pride, and love of sin, render men blind to the glory, deaf to the voice, or negligent to the salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ: nor can any thing but a penitent sense of the evil of sin, and the misery of a sinner, reconcile the proud heart of man to this salvation.

Though repentance therefore does not in any degree merit pardon; yet it is that disposition of mind, which both prepares the soul to receive it, and renders the possessor a meet object on whom a holy God may honourably bestow it, and therefore, no further obstacle remaining: God's justice being satisfied in the sufferings of the Redeemer: the point yielded by the sinner's repentance, that he did deserve to perish, and is saved by free grace: and his heart being now rendered willing to be saved in the appointed way; he shall, without all doubt or delay, have salvation, and the consolation which springs from it.

Were more encouragement needful, I might lead your attention to the many examples with which the word of God furnishes us, of sinners who had committed the most atrocious crimes, and borne the most infamous

mous characters, for complicated, long-continued guilt; who, on repentance, were pardoned and saved. It will be enough to recite a few of their names: such were Manasseh, the thief on the cross, Saul the persecutor, and the very men who crucified the Prince of Life. These instances are doubtless recorded purposely for the encouragement of such, who are ready to conclude, that their sins are too many and great, to be forgiven: and form a very important proof and exemplification of our doctrine: that no degree of guilt can exclude the true penitent from forgiveness, through the blood of Christ. And, although the Lord speaks of some, who sin against the Holy Ghost, and shall never be forgiven; and the apostle John of a sin unto death, which they who have committed are not to be prayed for: yet St. Paul extricates us out of this difficulty, by informing us, “that it is impossible to renew them to repentance:” which forms indeed an awful warning to those, who harden their hearts against conviction, and in impenitency; but forms no exception to our doctrine, and need give no discouragement to the penitent soul.

And now, sinners, you see the necessity of repentance, and the real nature of it, and the abundant encouragement you have to repent. I would hope, that from regard to your eternal welfare, you will set about it in
good

good earnest; not only in preference to your vain amusements and dissipations, but even to your most important business and interests, which are of no consequence in comparison with this "one thing needful." Arise then, and be doing, and the Lord will both assist and prosper your endeavours.

PART THE FOURTH.

The proper Season for REPENTANCE.

HE, who is but superficially acquainted with the credulity of man, and the artifice of satan; who has taken but little notice of the workings of his own heart, and made but little observation of what passes around him, would be apt to conclude this part of our subject needless: yet, I trust, it will be found to be of great importance, and essentially necessary, to discourse concerning the proper season of repentance.

The words of the Psalmist, quoted by the Apostle, comprize what I shall urge on this head: "To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart." The present time is alone ours: yesterday is irrecoverably gone; to-morrow we may be in eternity. Were, then, all of you in the prime of youth,
I would

I would endeavour to enforce on all the necessity of early repentance.

To such then, I first address myself. Consider, *young sinner*, that custom is second nature: your innate depravity forges the chains which hold you in bondage, but custom rivets them upon you. This is not mere speculation, it is the language of inspiration: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots; then may he, who is ACCUSTOMED to do evil, learn to do well."

Repentance may be considered either as the work of divine grace in us; or our own work by the assistance of divine grace. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." Doubtless it is always alike easy to Almighty God, to change the heart and renew the sinner: yet the sinner, when thus influenced to will, and do, may find vastly more difficulty in some cases and circumstances, than he would in others. Thus, when worldly connections, interests, cares, and projects, together with customary indulgences, have added strength to your lusts, you will find repentance vastly more arduous than at present. You will then find it vastly more difficult to cease to do evil, and learn to do well; to separate from the ungodly, to habituate your appetites and passions to be under government. If you now delay, and
should

Should hereafter repent, you will bitterly know what it is to pluck out a right eye, and cut off a right hand. When to the opposition of lusts grown ungovernable by gratification, and remorse for sins which exceed calculation, and bitter reflection * on the irreparable mischief you have been doing all your life; you add what it will cost you to renounce the friendship, to withstand the persuasions and inticements, to resist the arguments, to face the scorn, and bear the reproach of those comrades in iniquity, with whom you are hitherto happily unconnected. Whilst perhaps your own children, trained up in wickedness, or the wife or husband of your bosom, whom you have ignorantly espoused, may be amongst the number of those who are an offence unto you. Are you therefore in youth, in early youth, yea, in childhood? you are not too young to be sinners, both by nature and practice: evil dispositions, and evil actions, render repentance both needful and reasonable; and without it, you must perish in, and for your sins. Even now, then, I call upon you in the name of God, to “repent, and turn to God, and “do works meet for repentance.” Listen not to your corruptions, to your companions, to the cruel murderer of souls, who would persuade you, that ’tis soon enough yet.—

* Consider in this place, what hath been urged of the necessity of restitution, part the second. He who repents early, escapes that difficulty.

Millions are even now in outer darkness, who on earth, intended some time to repent, but imagined they had time enough before them. Perhaps there are scarce any, who did not heretofore think as you are thinking, and flatter themselves as you now do. Will you also trifle with the Almighty, till his patience be wearied out, and he cut you off, as he hath those who thus provoked him before you; and send you to be their companions, whose example you would imitate *?

Do you imagine you shall find less difficulty, or have more resolution to break through difficulties hereafter? Alas! your difficulties will daily both be multiplied and gather force; and you will find less and less inclination or resolution to encounter them. Fear, shame, and conscience, will make gradually more feeble resistance: restraints of education will wear off, and you will grow bolder in iniquity. Finding respite from punishment, you will grow more secure, and hardened in sin, till perhaps God will give you over to incurable obstinacy.

Do you imagine that sinful pleasures can afford you more satisfaction than is to be found in serious godliness? Poor deluded souls! I compassionate your case, whilst I abhor the blasphemous supposition. Yet once I thought the same; I bless God for

* Jer. xiii. 27.—Wo unto thee, O Jerusalem, *wilt thou* not be made clean? When shall it *once* be?

undeceiving me, and beg of him to grant you the same mercy. "There is no peace, "saith my God, for the wicked." "Vanity "and vexation are stamped upon all created "enjoyments." They consist of eager expectations, continual anxiety, disappointment, and mortifications; a few turbulent short-lived gratifications, insipid amusements, and fatiguing pursuits of pleasure. The mind of the poor deluded man, who thus seeks happiness, where it is not, is uneasy in waiting for the season of enjoyment; surfeited and dissatisfied even at the moment he longed for; pained at the retrospect; alarmed when he looks forward to death and judgment; and can find no respite from anxiety, but by banishing reflection, and foregoing the noblest privilege of the rational nature. Your smiles, ye votaries of pleasure, are hypocritical; your mirth is affectation; your heart is heaviness in the midst of your loudest peals of laughter: remorse of conscience, and foreboding fears, oft disturb even your most jovial hours, and extort the unwilling sigh: but they render solitude and reflection bitterness, whilst the least remembrance of death, or symptom of it's approach, excite a horror I have felt, but cannot describe.

This is earthly, ungodly pleasure, even when health, affluence, and all conceiveable advantages concur to add a relish to it: but

when sickness seizes the poor wretch, who knows no other joy : when poverty and adversity depress, and death approaches, his case is so miserable, and his anguish so intolerable, that no words can sufficiently describe it.

But true religion is the source of the sweetest serenity, the most refined delight, the most exquisite enjoyment. From conscious integrity, peace with God, submission to his will, and reliance on his providential and gracious care, spring calm content with the present, and serene expectation of the future ; which form a “ peace of God, which passeth all understanding.” Victory over the fear of death, and a well-grounded and lively hope of eternal happiness, support the soul in adversity, and increase the enjoyment of prosperity. Contemplation on the glories of the divine character, and the wonders God hath wrought, issuing in admiring love, adoring gratitude, and fervent praises, inspires the soul at some seasons, “ with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” A life of communion with God, an uniform walk in his pleasant ways, an increasing assurance, and experience of his love, fill the christian’s peaceful soul with an abiding satisfaction ; which nothing greatly interrupts but the stirrings of corruption, the force of temptation, and the imperfection of his obedience ; whereby, at times, guilt burthens his con-

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science,

science, and sorrow oppresses his heart : and yet even godly sorrow itself rather increases than lessens his enjoyment : and if he for a season be unhappy, it is not because he is so religious, but because he is no more so. Nor is there any rational satisfaction which he doth not enjoy with more real relish, because with more moderation, than others do : for real religion abridges us of no enjoyment, but that which is irrational, debasing, or inordinate. In short, a flash of lightning, which for a moment interrupts, and then increases the midnight gloom, bears more comparison to the cheerful genial light of the sun, than the most exquisite gratifications of sin do to those joys, which the real diligent christian experiences from day to day. “Come, taste and see how gracious “the Lord is, and how blessed they are “who trust in him.”

But doth satan persuade you, that you shall have time enough hereafter ? Alas ! can you be the dupes of so bare-faced an artifice ? You know you have no lease of your lives, nor are sure of beholding to-morrow’s light. Many as young, as healthy, as vigorous as you, are followed to the tomb. Dare you risque eternal happiness or misery on such a peradventure ? Reflect also, that your lives are in the hands of that God, whom your sins have greatly provoked, your presumptuous impenitency still more. May
he

he not be even at this moment saying, "thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee." Hast thou not done enough already to provoke him to it? And shouldst thou slight the present warning, and rush into forbidden pleasures: seriously consider, whether thou mayst not reasonably fear, lest, in the midst of some daring provocation, he should cut thee off with a stroke; and then, a great ransom cannot save thee.

Dare you flatter yourselves with the presumption of repenting, if not before, yet on a death-bed? Alas, how many are cut off by sudden death! how many bereft of reason by the violence of disease! how many are seized with madness, incurable madness! how many, I say, perish without one cry for mercy, and eternally curse their folly, in being the dupes of such a delusion! "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." You evidently see the design of Satan in this temptation; he aims only to lull you into security, till he can plunge you into despair; and then he will insult over you. But even should you have a space given you before death, can you reasonably hope, that God will then give you his grace, which you have so long refused? Are you sure you shall improve those hours? Can you at length overcome all those difficulties in your own strength, when you are languishing under a violent disorder; which you have considered

as next to insurmountable, even with the assistance of divine grace, all the days of your health? Will you then need any additional anguish, when your bones are full of strong pain, and nature is even sinking under the load? Can you then be sure that your repentance is real and genuine, when you have no opportunity of bringing it to the trial by the fruits it produces? One instance indeed is recorded of a dying penitent, to shew that repentance even in those circumstances is neither impossible nor unavailing: and but one, to teach us, that such cases are very rare. To day, then, make sure of this important concern. "Give not sleep to
 " thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eye-lids:
 " deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of
 " the hunter, and as a bird from the snare
 " of the fowler."

"Remember therefore your creator in the
 " days of your youth." Remember your obligations and relations to him, and your offences against him: remember, and repent, and seek forgiveness without delay, through that Saviour, who hath promised, that they who "seek him early shall find him."

But, perhaps, this best season is already elapsed with many of my readers; and it is too late to exhort them to early repentance. Perhaps some are secretly lamenting: "my
 " youth hath been spent in vanity and un-
 " godliness; yea, the prime of life is irre-
 " coverably

“ coverably past, and I am growing hoary
 “ in the ways of wickedness : What must I
 “ do ? Is there nothing for me, but a certain
 “ fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery
 “ indignation ? ” Indeed, my fellow sinner,
 thy case is very deplorable : thy day is almost
 spent, the night, wherein no man can work, is
 swiftly approaching : thy work is not begun ;
 yea, all thou hast been doing, during the
 whole course of thy life, must be, as it were,
 undone. Thou must travel back again, with
 weeping and supplication, all the way thou
 hast trodden for so many years. Death,
 judgment, and eternity, press upon thy un-
 prepared soul : the grave is yawning for thy
 enfeebled body : and should death seize upon
 thee, ere repentance hath taken place, it
 had been good for thee, hadst thou never
 been born. Still, however, thy case is not
 desperate : though provoked by thy impeni-
 tency, the Lord yet renews his compassionate
 invitations. If then thy heart begin to re-
 lent ; if remorse embitter thy soul ; if thou
 art at length willing to acknowledge thy
 offence, and seek his face ; come, and cast
 thyself at his feet, and venture upon his
 mercy and truth, who saith, “ Him that
 “ cometh unto me, I will *in no wise* cast out.”
 If *indeed thou art renewed* to repentance, tho’
 “ at the ninth or eleventh hour, thou shalt
 “ be equalled with those who have borne the
 “ heat and burden of the day.” Herein lies
 the danger and the difficulty ; but with God

all things are possible : he “ can change the
 “ Ethiopian’s skin, and the leopard’s spots ;
 “ and by his power, even thou, who hast
 “ been long accustomed to do evil, mayst
 “ learn to do well.” Admire then his long-
 suffering, who hath borne with thy impenitent
 disregard of his precepts and promises, his
 authority and invitations, for forty, fifty,
 sixty, or seventy years : and has neither cut
 thee off by death, deprived thee of thy
 much-abused reason, nor left thee to utter
 insensibility. This is distinguishing pa-
 tience.

Methinks, aged sinner, I see thy relent-
 ings, hear thy groans, and witness thy tears,
 confusion and despondency, whilst the crimes
 of a long life pass in review before thee, the
 sword of divine justice is brandished against
 thee, conscience reproaches, and satan in-
 sinuates that now it is too late : yea, thou
 art even inclined once more to listen to his
 insinuations ; to conclude that there is no
 hope, and that after such a life as thine, thy
 late repentance, and worthless services, will
 never meet with acceptance. But reject this
 dishonourable thought, resist the lying temp-
 ter : when he persuaded thee heretofore, that
 it was too early in life to repent, he led thee
 to the brink of an awful precipice : if he
 prevail in persuading thee it is now too late,
 he pushes thee headlong into everlasting
 ruin.

ruin. In both he acts in character, "a liar
" and a murderer from the beginning."

"God's ways are above our ways, and his
" thoughts above our thoughts, and his
" mercies are higher than the heavens," else
were thy case desperate. But now, though
he will not accept thy late repentance, and
feeble obedience of one poor hour, for their
own sake; yet, for his own name's sake, and
through the atonement and intercession of
Jesus, he will pardon, and justify, and save
thee, if truly penitent, and a real believer.
This discovery of the unspeakable riches of
divine love, whilst it gives encouragement
to thy drooping heart, ought to increase thy
remorse for having so neglected and abused
a God of such excellency and mercy; and
to quicken thy diligence, in availing thyself
of his patience, by fleeing for refuge to the
hope still set before thee. "To-day, then,
" if ye will hear his voice," before to-mor-
row, embrace his proffered mercy, and
harden not your hearts. And whatever
stage of human life you are now arrived at,
I can only inculcate the same exhortation.
"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold,
" now is the day of salvation." And sug-
gest the same petition; Psal. xc. 12.—"So
" teach us to number our days, that we may
" appl your hearts unto wisdom." "What-
" soever thy hand findeth to do, do it (spee-
" dily, and) with all thy might; for there
" is

“ is no work, nor device, nor knowledge,
 “ nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou
 “ goest.” Eccles. ix. 10. I have shewn you,
 that this, of all other, is the most necessary
 and important work you can find to do:
 make then no delay, lest he swear in his
 wrath, you shall never enter into his rest.

PART THE FIFTH.

The Means of REPENTANCE.

IN our entrance on this part of our subject, a formidable objection may be started, yea, and grounded on what hath already been discoursed, against treating upon the means of repentance at all. It hath been observed, that repentance is the gift of God to us, the purchase of Christ for us, and the work of the Holy Spirit in us: how then, it will be objected, can we do any thing towards it? If it please God to bestow it upon us, we shall repent without difficulty or labour: if not, our labour will be altogether to no purpose. It is a certain truth, that repentance is the gift of God, as hath been proved from plain scripture testimonies: 'tis equally true, and capable of the same proof, that we must diligently labour for it.

Nor

Nor is there any inconsistency betwixt these distinct views of the subject: they only appear inconsistent to our dark and narrow apprehensions. Upon a similar occasion, the truth, the word, and wisdom of God saith, "LABOUR not for the meat that perisheth, " but for that meat, which endureth unto " everlasting life, which the Son of man shall " GIVE you." John vi. 27. Christ will give it most freely, but you must labour for it diligently. Thus the harvest is the gift of God, who giveth seed to the sower; giveth rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and causeth the earth to yield her increase; yet must the husbandman labour. In both temporal and spiritual concerns, God gives not to the slothful but to the diligent; and his bounty doth not supersede, but encourage our activity.

He works in us, that we may work out our own salvation; he hath appointed means, and commanded us to use them. Obedience is our duty, and the evidence of our sincerity. We are to use the means, and trust in the Lord to render them effectual to the appointed end; not depend on them, or rest in them. They, who seriously desire to repent and turn to God, will manifest their sincerity, by thus using every proper means in a proper manner: nor shall their labour be in vain; " for every one that asketh, receive, and he that seeketh findeth, and " to

“ to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” But negligence will detect hypocrites, and justify God in their condemnation. Something then must be done, in order to our being made partakers of repentance: not under the notion of merit, as if we made the purchase; for it is the gift of God: not under the notion of efficacious operation; for it is the work of divine grace: but in order to evidence our integrity in purposing repentance; and that we may be found waiting upon God for it in the way of his appointment. And though the means will not effect their end, without efficacious grace: yet are they as much calculated to produce the effect, as medicines to remove sickness, or agriculture to procure the crop; both of which are rendered effectual only by the divine blessing.

I. Then, consider your ways. Thus David. “ I thought on my ways, and turned “ my feet unto thy testimonies.” Ps. cxix. 59. Are you now desirous truly to repent? Retire frequently into your chamber, shun the hurry and dissipation of a crowd, and court solitude, that you may recollect yourselves, and seriously commune with your own heart. There minutely review your whole past life: with exactness survey your thoughts, words, and actions, ever since the dawn of reason, or from the beginning of recollection. Ask yourselves seriously such questions as these:

“ What

“ What have you been scheming, intending, pursuing all your days? What hath been the standard of your judgment, and rule of your conduct? the opinion of men, or the word of God? the fashions of the world, or the example of Christ? What have your affections been fixed on? Have you given God or the world your heart: I mean your warmest desires, and most devoted attachment? Have you intentionally been pleasing God, or yourselves? Have you been seeking his glory in every thing; or your own ease, interest, gratification, and honour? In what have your time and money been most cheerfully expended? In works of piety and charity; or in gratifying your sensuality, pride, and ambition? Have you been laying up, or aiming to lay up treasures in heaven, or on earth? Have you improved health, prosperity, abilities, and influence, in promoting the glory of God, the interests of piety, and the good of men? Or have you done no good, but mischief with them? Hath God been the delightful subject of your meditations and conversation? or have you willingly and habitually forgotten him, and regarded religious thoughts and converse, as insipid and irksome? Hath the sweet work of prayer and praise, the worship of God, and hearing and reading his word, been your pleasure or your task? Have you been out of your element when thus employed, and found more charms, and

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expe-

experienced more satisfaction in licentious company and dissipated mirth? Have you habitually revered the sacred name of God, hallowed his sabbaths, and frequented his sanctuary with reverence and devotion? Or have you taken his name in vain *, despised his ordinances, polluted his sabbaths, or mocked him with an hypocritical worship?

What have your imaginations been? pure and heavenly, or lewd, ambitious, envious, covetous, revengeful, and abominable?

* By taking the name of God in vain, I do not mean, nor does the Bible mean, merely blasphemy, perjury, and profane swearing; but every jest, or expression, which implies want of reverence to the name of God, his word, and sacred things. Almost in all companies, the conversation, even tho' trifling, and polluting, is incessantly interlarded with the words GOD, LORD, CHRIST, and such like; which are formed into hackney'd phrases, and used as mere expletives to adorn a period; or as notes of admiration, approbation, or indignation. Nothing can more fully discover the degree, in which sinful man despises the glorious God, than this general, and almost universal practice. Without pleasure, profit, or temptation, in violation of an express command, in defiance of an awful threatening; that tremendous name, which impresses angels with holy awe, and at which devils tremble, is made man's mere by-word. But when the affronted Jehovah, shall at last address the sinner, "Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord?" and he finds that God will "not hold him guiltless;" his profane trifling will be at an end; and he will be constrained to tremble at that name, he would not reverence. The inefficacy of much apparent religion, and the worthlessness of much evangelical profession, are demonstrated, by their failing to repress this awful profaneness. All true christians, who worship in spirit and truth, are, by that profound veneration they bear to the Lord, cured effectually of this practice; and ought to unite in bearing testimony against it boldly, in all companies.

What

What hath your discourse been? edifying, serious, and candid; or profane, polluted, trifling, slanderous, and dissembling? What have your tempers been? meek, peaceable, and kind; or turbulent, contentious, and overbearing? Have you behaved, as the word of God directs, in relative life, as parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, and servants? Hath equity, disinterestedness, and kindness; or selfishness, covetousness, and fraud, directed your worldly business? Have you in sobriety, chastity, and temperance, governed your appetites and passions?"

But I have already exceeded due bounds in this specimen of queries, which you ought with all impartiality to propose to yourselves, allowing conscience, after mature recollection, to return a faithful answer. In short, set the law of God, and the example of Christ before you eyes: make diligent search into your secret practices, intentions, and inclinations: steadily view your likeness, and estimate your character in this manner, until you know what manner of persons you are. Shrink not back from that view of self-deformity, which will thus be represented to you; but look, and look again, till you abhor yourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.

The man, whose circumstances are embarrassed, may possibly retrieve all, if he be

content in time to look well into his affairs, and be made sensible how bad they are : but to shrink from this inspection, and to banish reflection on a disagreeable subject, completes many a man's ruin. Thus multitudes are afraid, or averse to fully examine their own character, conduct, and state ; flee from reflection, because uneasy and mortifying ; and huddle up all in an unexamined obscurity, till they rush blindfold into remediless ruin. But by carefully examining how matters stand betwixt God and our souls, the danger is discovered, the remedy is at hand, and our destruction happily prevented. Shift not then this business : slur it not over, but go through with it, though disagreeable and mortifying to pride : and you will find yourselves amply recompensed, not only by it's subserviency to repentance, but to future solid and abiding peace of conscience.

II. Examine your heart and life daily. Nor only say, what " have I done ? " but, what am I now doing ? " The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it ? " And the Lord pronounces him a " fool, who trusteth " in his own heart." Men retain their good opinion of, and confidence in themselves, because they remain strangers to their own hearts, for want of daily examination ; for the only way to discover a concealed villain, is carefully to watch him. Watch then your
own

own hearts: examine well your own lives: keep before your eyes the requirements of the divine law, as far as known: search the scriptures daily for further information: review your daily conduct, judging of it by that infallible standard: descend to particulars; to omissions and commissions, words and actions, intentions, and imaginations; deficiencies and defilements in duty, and backwardness to it. This will prove of vast importance to self-knowledge, and consequently to self-abasement. Tho' difficult at first, it will soon become natural and pleasant to the true christian; will continually keep the heart humble and watchful, and the conscience tender; and dependance on the mercy of God, through the blood of Christ, for pardon, in continual exercise. This conduct, like well-ordered accounts, will prevent a thousand anxieties and terrors in times of danger and sickness, and at the hour of death. Grudge not, then, this labour, if you are ambitious to be called disciples of Jesus, and do not judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.

III. Meditate frequently upon such subjects, as tend to excite and increase in the heart, the sense of the odiousness of sin; labouring with your reluctant minds to bring and keep them close to this exercise. Impenitency is greatly the effect of extenuating notions of the malignity of sin: repentance

must then flow from a sense of it's hateful-
ness. 'Tis needless to enumerate the various
subjects which, duly meditated upon, may
have this effect; and it would lead us into
repetitions. Such are the majesty and ex-
cellency, authority and law, threatenings and
judgments of God: his righteous severity
against sinning angels, against Adam and
his whole posterity, against the inhabitants
of the old world, against Sodom and Go-
morrah, against the nations of Canaan,
against the people of Israel, in a variety
of instances, especially in the final destruc-
tion of their city, and continued dispersion
of their nation. All these, and others too
numerous for me to mention, are but fore-
runners and emblems of that everlasting de-
struction, wherewith in the future state they
shall be "punished, who know not God,
" and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus
" Christ." Now, "we know that the judg-
" ment of God is according unto truth:"
these awful instances of his tremendous
justice shew us *his judgment* of the evil of
sin, and what it really deserves: even *his*
judgment, who is LOVE, and delighteth not
in the death of a sinner; but punishes solely
to express his holy hatred of that abomina-
ble thing, which we lodge in our bosom,
and plead in behalf of. And these things
were written on purpose to lead us to judge
concerning sin, as God judgeth: and this
will surely issue in unfeigned repentance.

IV. Meditate frequently and intensely on the death of Christ: consider, who he was, and what he suffered, and wherefore he suffered. Purposely retire to contemplate this surprizing scene, nor yield to weariness or indisposition, till you arrive at some heart-affecting views of a crucified Saviour. Superficial speculations may amuse the fancy, and furnish out conversation: but without deeply examining and well digesting this subject, and being thus established in judgment concerning it, we can never in habitual experience reconcile godly sorrow with abiding peace, and joy in the Lord; humble repentance, with a lively hope of everlasting life. Here that christian, who turns his eyes from other objects, that he may steadfastly look unto Jesus *, will perceive that the awful vengeance of God against sin, (before considered) proceeds not from want of love to the persons of sinners, but from abhorrence of moral evil, the effect of a perfect view of it's infinite malignity: that this judgment and conduct is essential to his most perfect character, and requisite to his glory as moral governor of the universe. When, therefore, in boundless love, he determined the salvation of sinners; he would not spare his own Son; but would sooner deliver him, in whom his soul delighted, to the most intense agonies and ignominious

* Alluding to Heb. xii. 2. ἀποφωτισ.

death, than leave sin unpunished, or permit his intelligent creatures to remain ignorant of his infinite hatred of it. For the instruction of the whole universe to eternal ages, in these and other important truths, respecting the divine character, law, and government, did the Son of God "suffer once for " sins, the just for the unjust."

Here likewise the sinner may learn to estimate the worth of his immortal soul: the vanity of this world: the dangerous situation he is placed in: the difficulty there is in a sinner's salvation (which cost him, who created and upholds all things by his powerful word, such humiliation and sufferings): the unspeakable love of God, and his willingness to save sinners; seeing he hath not withheld his only begotten Son from us. These are lessons, which, being well learned, are all eminently conducive to repentance; and can be learned to such advantage in no other way, as by "looking unto Jesus, and "meditating on his sufferings." He then, who sincerely would repent, must daily retire in contemplation to Gethsemane and Golgotha.

V. Lastly, The whole must be rendered effectual by fervent and importunate prayer, without which all other means will be in vain. Whether we read, or meditate, or examine our lives and hearts, or whatever we do, prayer must accompany all; for it is
God

God who takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh, and renews us unto repentance; and him we must earnestly supplicate to bestow on us this good and perfect gift. But alas! it is extremely difficult to prevail upon men to get alone, and on their bended knees, day by day, to beseech the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ, to work this change in, and bestow this gift upon them. To read, to hear sermons, and other things of a public nature, men may be more easily induced. A mere form, or task of devotion, may also be reconciled with a self-sufficient and worldly spirit and conduct: but real prayer stands in direct opposition thereto. It is the very language of indigence and dependance, and earnest longings after God and holiness. In order to pray as he ought, a man must know, in some measure, how vast and various his wants are: he must understand his true interest and happiness; he must supremely value the favour and image of God. No man can truly pray for spiritual blessings, who doth not carefully review his life, explore his heart, and in some measure know his own character: who is not in some degree acquainted with the majesty, holiness, and heart-searching knowledge of God, and his own absolute dependance upon him; his relations and obligations to him, and offences committed against him: and who is not, in a general way at least, instructed in the way of access for sinners to an offended God,

God, through the atoning blood of his Son; and humbly willing to approach in this appointed way. Such a one draws near with reverential fears and deep self-abasement, confessing his unworthiness, and imploring forgiveness, encouraged only by believing apprehensions of the rich mercy of God, to sinners thro' the mediation of Jesus. Conscious also of ignorance, weakness, and depravity, in humble sincerity and earnest longings, he pleads the promises of the word of God, and implores the teaching, strengthening, sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Faith, repentance, and universal holiness, he longs for, feels his want of, expects, and seeks daily from God in prayer. In all this, his words express, but not fully, the very meaning of his heart. Daily he thus opens and pours out his soul unto God, turning the precepts and promises he reads in, or hears from, the word of God, into fervent petitions. All his sorrows, anxieties, and perplexities, he spreads before the Lord, seeking, in every exigence, support, direction, and consolation from him: subjoining continual thanksgivings for mercies received, and intercessions for all around him: and submissively referring himself, in every case, to the will and wisdom of his heavenly Father. " Thus is he careful for nothing, " but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, makes his requests " known unto God;" " and casts his care " upon

“ upon him, who careth for him.” Such prayer as this cannot be taught by man, but must be the effect of “ the pouring out of “ the spirit of grace and supplication ; who communicating light divine to the understanding, and holy dispositions to the heart, excites fervent and spiritual desires in the soul, and teacheth us to pray with “ groanings that cannot be uttered.” It is therefore called in the word of God “ praying in “ and by the Spirit ;” as opposed to a form of godliness, or good words spoken with the mouth, without suitable affections and desires in the heart *. He, whose words express more than *he* intends, or heartily desires, prays *formally* and hypocritically : He, who means all his words express, and more than he can find words to express, evidently prays spiritually, and though he may not be aware of it, is assisted in prayer by the Holy Spirit †.

But if this be really prayer, and nothing, however specious or ostentatious, be prayer,

* Saul, previous to conversion, was a strict Pharisee, who made long prayers ; yet when the Lord spoke of his conversion to Ananias, he says, with emphasis, “ Behold he prayeth.” Before, he might read, or repeat long forms, or pray fluently in extemporaneous language. But now he feels his indigence, dependance, and unworthiness, and really prays with suitable desires and dispositions.

† I am far from thinking that no prayer is accepted, which comes not up to this description : but this is the nature of a sinner's praying for spiritual blessings : to some good measure according to his grace a believer attains, and every accepted prayer has something of the same nature.

which

which has not in it something of this nature, (as I trust, upon mature examination of the scripture, will be found the case): then, evidently, the proud, ungodly, and carnal-minded, cannot pray aright. Nor can it be deemed strange, if, when a sinner is *first* seriously impressed with concern for his soul, he hath great reluctance to this spiritual exercise, and knows not how to go about it. For even real christians, who are arrived at some measure of stability, and have made considerable proficiency in a life of communion with God, meet with considerable difficulty in this grand concern; and have need continually to be humbled for neglects and imperfections; and want continually fresh supplies of divine assistance to excite, teach, and enable them thus to pray always and not faint.

Satan also will oppose to the uttermost all his artifices to prevent a sinner's approaching to the throne of grace: well knowing, that in the critical season, when any person is under serious impressions, if he can be prevailed on to neglect prayer, they will soon wear off, and leave the conscience more insensible than before. The business, pleasures, diversions, and society of the world; and that scorn with which ungodly men treat a life of prayer, combine their influence in aid of natural corruption and satan's temptation, in keeping the poor convinced
sinner

sinner from the throne of grace. And, as if these hindrances were not sufficient, even some professing serious godliness, (whose intention may be better than their judgment) extremely increase the difficulty, by strenuously contending, that unconverted persons ought not to pray, or be exhorted to it *. It is allowed, that such is the pride and ungodliness of man, that left to himself, and under satan's influence, he never *will* pray in sincerity. Confounding this depraved disinclination with a real want of ability, they thence argue the want of obligation.

* If a man ought not to pray before conversion, he ought to know, that is be sure, of his conversion before he pray: for if he be not sure of his conversion, he cannot be sure whether prayer be his duty, or privilege. Thus assurance springs up in a sinner's heart all at once; and now having received he may ask; having found he may begin to seek; the door being opened he may begin to knock.—Surely at first glance every one must see this to be absurd, and unscriptural, yea antiscritptural. Truly all ought to pray, but none will in sincerity, until the holy Spirit in some degree inclines the heart. Now a man feels an inclination to do that, which before was his duty, tho' he did it not: frequently he knows not from whence this change proceeds: but is encouraged by such scriptures as that before alluded to, Matt. vii. 7, 8. and that, Isaiah lv. 6, 7. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, &c." And thus he begins to ask and seek; and in consequence to receive and find; and in this way giving diligence he makes his calling and election sure. And this reconciles all the different views the scriptures give us of this matter. The Lord seeking us when lost, and being found of us, when we sought him not, inclines us (tho' not aware whence this inclination comes) to seek him in prayer; and thus we receive all spiritual and eternal blessings in the way of asking and receiving.

But this argument, if it prove any thing, proves too much ; and would consequently repeal the law and abrogate the gospel, and furnish satan himself with an apology, by making inward depravity a justification of outward rebellion : the desperate wickedness of the heart, for the desperate wickedness of the life. For certain it is, that man is as much disinclined to keep the whole law, or to repent, and believe the gospel, as he is to pray ; and will never do either one or the other, if left to himself, destitute of the influences of divine grace. But doth this indeed justify all our transgressions of the law, and contempt of the gospel ?

Again, prayer is an important part of that worship and obedience the law requires : and it is also the grand means of receiving from Jesus new covenant blessings. He then, who prays not, at once breaks the law, and contemns the gospel : “ and he that keeps the whole law, and * *thus* offends in one point, “ is guilty of all.” James ii. 10. If then a sinner ought not to pray, he is justifiable in breaking the whole law, and equally justifiable in neglecting the salvation of the gospel. But in truth, our depraved inclinations are in no respect the measure of our

* Numbers xv. 30, 31. The soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same *reproacheth* the Lord,—he hath *despised* the Word of the Lord.

duty, but the direct opposite. "The carnal mind is enmity to God; is not subject to *the law of God*, nor indeed *can* be." This law, to which the carnal mind *cannot* be subject, is the measure of our duty. This men cannot obey, because of the depravity of their nature, which enhances, instead of extenuating their guilt. Men ought to love God and one another: having sinned, they ought to repent: they ought to believe, and pray, and deny themselves, and mortify their lusts. But they do not. Wherefore? because they dislike God's service, hate his law, reject his authority, despise his gospel, and prefer the gratification of their lusts. And these hateful dispositions are so predominant in them, that without the Lord powerfully interpose, they are insuperable. And are these hateful dispositions seriously urged as an excuse? Will any dare to urge them at the day of judgment? No, every mouth will then be stopped, and all the world shall be found guilty before God. I should not have touched upon this controversial subject, had I not observed how greedily this poison is drank down, and how fatally it operates in stupifying the conscience, flattering the pride, and apologizing for the sloth of mankind.

Instead of thus abetting, we should endeavour to counteract these artifices of satan,

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and to combat the reluctance of a sinner's heart, by shewing the absolute necessity of prayer unto salvation : by enforcing the invitations to the throne of grace : by expatiating on the promises made to all, who call upon the Lord : by explaining the nature of prayer : directing in the new and living way to the throne of grace : answering their objections, obviating their discouragements, representing it as *our* privilege, and unspeakable consolation : and exhorting them to draw near, and share our happiness : assured, that they, who are thus excited to pray, will in due time " render " unto God the praise of making them to " differ." With this I return from this digression. My fellow sinners, you must pray, or perish. Your backwardness to pray should humble you and stir you up to overcome it, especially by crying unto the Lord to incline your heart by his grace to love and delight in prayer. Your ignorance should urge you to begin as the disciples did ; " Lord, teach us to pray." You must not yield to corruption, temptation, or discouragement, but persevere therein with all sincerity and earnestness. If you pray aright, you will be far enough from trusting in, or boasting of, your prayers ; for you will perceive much imperfection and defilement therein. But though humbled on that account, you need not despond ; your prayers, though broken, faltering, and feeble,

feeble, if you mean what you express, and desire what you ask, shall meet with acceptance, through the intercession of Jesus, and be not only answered, but in due season far exceeded. Especially in this way you must seek repentance; as the gift of God through Jesus Christ, using the other means with diligence, earnestness, and perseverance: and then you will assuredly be made partakers of that repentance, which is unto salvation, not to be repented of.

C O N C L U S I O N.

HAVING thus finished my design, nothing remains but to close the subject by a few practical observations.

I. I would observe from what has been discoursed, that every species of religion, in which repentance formeth not an eminent part from first to last, is justly to be suspected, yea, certainly to be condemned, as unscriptural and destructive. There is much of this religion in the world, which comes recommended oftentimes by extraordinary zeal for some peculiar doctrines of christianity, and is distinguished by unwarranted confidence and high affections. Men hearing the gospel, are superficially alarmed on account of their sins, and eagerly look out for comfort. Through inexperience they lie open to satan's artifice, and are easily imposed on with false comfort, deduced from false principles, exactly suited to their carnal unhumbled hearts. Thus they presume that their sins are pardoned, and their state good: with this presumption, self-love is delighted, and high affections produced: these expressed in earnest, fluent language, create them injudicious admirers, which flatters and affects them the more, and confirms

firms them in their confidence; and they must doubt no more, after such experiences. Yet this is all but a land flood, and soon subsides. They gradually experience a decay of their affection, and grow lifeless, indolent, and worldly: with their affection, their confidence flags, but they struggle hard to exclude doubtings: they call themselves backsliders; allow themselves to have forsaken their first love; and groan out Job's complaint, but not in Job's meaning, "Oh that it were with me, as in months past." And would a wish suffice, something might be done; but other exertion they have no heart for. To close all, they abuse the doctrine of final perseverance: take it for granted that they are saints: expect to be restored as it were by miracle, whilst they turn a deaf ear to the voice of Christ, commanding them to "be zealous, and repent." At length, perhaps, a suitable occasion and temptation presenting, they throw aside their profession.

This is the very religion of the stony-ground hearers, who had faith, and confidence, and joy, such as they were, but no repentance or humility*, and therefore no

* It is very observable how often the words, "Every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted," is repeated by our Saviour; and how many similar expressions are used by his apostles. This infallibly teaches us, that all appearances of religion are fallacious, so long as the heart remains unhumiliated.

root in themselves : for it is only by renewing our hearts unto repentance, that the ground is prepared for the reception of the seed, and the production of true faith and holiness, as hath been already demonstrated.

Let no man deceive you by vain words, as if this was a low or legal matter. Except you are partakers of repentance, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance ; all your religion is vain, your hopes presumptuous, and your destruction inevitable ; whatever other attainments, or gifts, or experiences you may have to boast of, or with which to buoy up your confidence. Satan can transform himself into an angel of light, and as effectually, (though more unsuspectedly) ruin souls by false religion, as by open ungodliness.

II. I observe from what hath been discoursed, that great care is requisite in distinguishing betwixt true repentance, and that which is superficial and merely natural*. This is of vast importance, as numbers of those, who die impenitent, have at times
judged

* Some will, perhaps, be disposed to enquire, why I do not adopt the common distinction betwixt *legal* and *evangelical* repentance? As the mode of expression is not scriptural, every one is at liberty to use it or not : and it did not appear to me sufficiently exact or comprehensive for my purpose. True repentance has more respect to the law, as transgressed by sin, and justly condemning the sinner, than any false repentance can have. Whilst, on the other hand, men are more frequently seduced into a dependence on a superficial repentance

judged themselves, and been thought by others, to be penitent. Let it be then remembered, that true repentance, though generally accompanied with terror, tears, confessions, and outward reformation, good words, fair promises, and earnest resolutions, doth not consist in, or uniformly attend upon any or all of them. But true repentance is a change of judgment, inclination, and affection, in respect of sin immediately; accompanied, preceded, or followed by a change of judgment, inclination, and affection respecting God and his law, Christ and his gospel, ourselves and our conduct, this world and the next. From this change, spring sorrow for sin, self-abasement, and condemnation; sole dependence on God's mercy; supreme valuation of Jesus and his salvation; love to God, and holiness; tenderness of conscience; zeal for good works; all holy tempers, holy conversation, and holy conduct; accompanied with continual humiliations for remaining imperfections and defilements. Where these effects have been evidently produced, though with little or no terror, no effusions of tears, or seasons of peculiar melting; but gradually and

ance by unwarrantable presumptions of mercy, and false apprehensions of evangelical truth, than by slavish regard to the law. *Natural* and *spiritual* repentance seems to me a preferable distinction. By natural repentance, I would understand every sort of repentance a mere natural man is capable of: by spiritual repentance, that which springs from true grace in the heart.

silently.

silently, the repentance is yet sincere and genuine, by this rule—it leads to Christ and holiness. But all other appearances, whether of legal terror issuing in self-dependence, and neglect of Christ : or of supposed evangelical humiliation issuing in professed dependence on Christ and free grace, whilst sin is not abhorred and avoided, nor holiness loved and practised, are superficial and hypocritical. Herod might have passed for a true penitent, if John would have allowed him his Herodias : yet John shall lose his head, rather than Herod, notwithstanding promising appearances, will part with his beloved lust. And human nature is just the same in other men, that it was in Herod. Let no repentance therefore satisfy any man, which doth not endear Christ and universal holiness ; and divorce the heart from every lust, especially that which heretofore was the customary and beloved sin.

III. I would, from what hath been discoursed, take occasion to consider in few words, the nature and necessity of regeneration. No other religion, but that which hath been described, requires that entire change which this, and a variety of expressions in the sacred scriptures, of like import, imply. A Pharisee's reformation, morality, and outward worship, require no entire inward renovation : and having no experience of it, nor seeing any occasion for it,

it, with Nicodemus he exclaims, "How can these things be?" The evangelical, or antinomian self-deceiver also may have his opinions, affections, and confidence, without becoming a new creature : and will therefore, whilst he uses the terms, mistake their import, and signify by them some of those impulses and revelations which he experiences and boasts of.

But self-admiring, self-justifying man, will never exercise that self-lothing and self-condemning repentance which hath been described, except he be born again. Insensible to the attractions of heavenly objects, through inordinate love of worldly things, he never will renounce and abhor all sin, mortify every lust, die to all carnal objects, and delight in God and universal holiness ; except he be changed into a new creature by the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit ; except " old things pass away, and " all things become new."

This is the new birth so frequently spoken of in the sacred scriptures. A new principle of divine life implanted in the heart, purifying the various powers of the soul. Hence proceed an enlightened understanding, a sound judgment in divine things, holy affections, a pure imagination, a sanctified memory, and a well-informed, tender, but not superstitious conscience. Hence proceed new fears, new hopes, new joys,
new

new sorrows, new aversions and desires, new dispositions, and a new life. Yet, as these things are in this life only imperfect in their degree, this imperfection of grace, and remainder of corruption, extort from the true christian bitter complaints; "Oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and put vigour into his prayers, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me:" and still find him employment for repentance and watchfulness, and endear free forgiveness, through the blood of Christ.

All your aversion to this thorough repentance, and all your delays about it, only demonstrate your need of being born again. Should God implant in your hearts such a new principle of holiness, as would relish and find pleasure in divine things, you would find it natural and easy to abhor sin, mourn over it, and forsake it; to repent, and do works meet for repentance. Have you then a real desire after this invaluable gift? If you have not, but prefer the quiet satisfaction of your carnal inclinations, you are justly left without that which you so despise. If you have, "ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

IV. I now take my leave of impenitent sinners with a serious exhortation. I mean of such as are living secretly or openly in covetousness, injustice, lewdness, drunkenness, profaneness, or any known sin; who remember not to hallow the sabbath, to read the scriptures, to worship God, to relieve the poor, or any other known duty: or who proudly trust in themselves, that they are righteous, and despise others, and neglect Christ and his salvation. Oh make no more excuses or delays: "flee from the wrath to come." "Evil pursueth sinners:" if it overtake you in impenitency, eternal misery is your dreadful portion. Yet, yet a long-suffering God has patience with you: the gospel invites, and Jesus stands with open arms to receive you: complains that you will not come to him, that "you may have life;" affirms with an oath, that "he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner;" and, as with tears of compassion, adds, "turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Do you then love death? Will ye slight such warnings, such exhortations, such invitations, such compassion? Well, if this prevail not, I must with reluctance leave you, as Paul did the Jews. "Your blood be upon your own head, I am free."

V. I now turn to thee, poor weeping sinner, who art almost inconsolable, and sinking in despondency. Thou scarce canst hope

hope that God will pardon so great a sinner the expectation seems to border on presumption: yet still thy humiliation appears to thyself slight, and thy repentance superficial, and thy heart insensible: yea, though it is almost melted within thee, it feels like a very stone; and still thou pleadest, "Oh " take away the heart of stone, and give " the heart of flesh." Behold, I bring thee glad tidings of great joy; and I shall share thy joy, if I may but be the instrument of administering peace and comfort to thee: " Come unto me," saith Jesus, " all ye that " are weary and heavy laden, and I will give " you rest." Behold, he calleth *thee*; be of good courage. All who will, may come; he hath given thee the willing mind, " and " will in no wise cast thee out." He will bind up thy broken heart, and give thee the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Only wait his time: let him probe thy wounds to the bottom: catch not impatiently at comfort: beg for still deeper humiliation: use every means of increasing thy abhorrence of, and watchfulness against sin: and it shall not be long before " he will shed " abroad his love in thy heart, and cause " thee to abound in hope, thro' the power " of the Holy Ghost." In the mean time reflect, that whilst thou art mourning on earth, heaven resounds with joyful acclamations and praises on thy account: wait then
and

and pray, and thou shalt, ere long, rejoice and praise too, and that for ever.

VI. But some perhaps will say, I have not this work to do now, I repented many years ago. What, art thou still a sinner, and hast no need to repent! The true christian can indeed thankfully say, my repentance is effectually begun: but only the saint in glory can *truly* say, my repentance is finished. The more a true believer knows of God and Christ, and the law and gospel; and the larger his experience is of his own depravity and the Lord's goodness: the more he hates sin, the more he recollects of former sins, and the quicker sense he hath of present sinfulness, and the deeper and purer his repentance. He rejoices in the Lord with penitent joy, and mourns for sin with sweet and joyful mourning. His humility increases his thankfulness and admiration of the love of Christ, and enhances his consolation; for it is a pleasant thing to be thankful. But if the thought that thy sins were pardoned finished thy repentance, and dried up thy tears, thy repentance needs repenting of, and thou art awfully deceived.

Finally, My fellow christians, let us frequently-renew our recollection of former sins, our self-examination, our meditations on those subjects which first excited our abhorrence of iniquity; especially our meditations on a bleeding Saviour. Let us

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daily renew our acceptance of Christ in all his offices, seeking forgiveness of our daily transgressions through his blood; and exercising ourselves to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and man. Thus, as true penitents, endeavouring to glorify God, adorn the gospel, and serve our generation; we may hope to live in comfort, die in peace, and have an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A P P E N D I X,

Concerning HALLOWING *the* SABBATH.

THROUGHOUT this Discourse, it hath been supposed, that there is in force a divine mandate of hallowing the sabbath, which all are bound to obey, and contract guilt by neglecting. But the change in the dispensation, since the fourth commandment was given; the alteration of the day, from the seventh to the first of the week; and the manner that alteration was introduced, have afforded some persons an occasion of arguing against the obligation: the judgments of others seem unsettled, and confused about it: and those who will profane the sabbath, are by these things furnished with some plausible excuse, and preserved from remorse of conscience on that account. For these reasons, I judged it might be useful, to subjoin a few brief hints upon the subject.

I. It should be noticed, that the appointment of the sabbath was long before the ceremonial law, even from the beginning of the creation; and therefore cannot, in it's

own nature, be ceremonial. That Gen. ii. 1—3. are thus to be understood, may be confirmed by the prohibition of gathering manna on the seventh day, Exod. xvi. previous to giving any part of the law. The very language of the fourth commandment, “Remember the sabbath-day to keep it holy,” as well as the reason assigned in the close, evinces the same. And this is corroborated and illustrated by the general custom of all ages and nations, (so far as I have read or heard) of computing time by weeks, or periodical returns of the seventh day. Of this fact, no reason can be assigned so satisfactory, as supposing it to be the effect of an original institution, handed down by tradition, amongst all the descendants of Adam and Noah; which continued even after the institution, which gave rise to it, was forgotten.

2. The observation of the sabbath, being made a part of the Mosaic dispensation, is interwoven with the whole system. It is enforced in the moral law of ten commandments, as delivered from Mount Sinai; introduced in the midst of their positive institutions; and enforced by temporal punishments, to be executed by civil authority. This shews its importance: evinces, that it partakes of the excellency of the moral law: forms an eminent part of, and is fundamental to the maintenance of all instituted worship:

ship: is typical and preparatory for the heavenly sabbath: and on every account is proper to be enforced by the authority of the magistrate: who may not draw his sword to propagate systems of doctrine, or formulas of worship: but may and ought to use his authority to repress immorality and profaneness, and promote the public worship of God in the land. The substance of this commandment, is of a moral nature. To separate some known, stated, and periodical portion of our time to religious purposes, when all other engagements being postponed, men should assemble to worship God, and learn his will; is evidently an appointment resulting from the reason and nature of things.—The glorious perfections of God, the rational nature of man: our relations and obligations to our Creator and Benefactor, Governor and Judge: the honour he requires, and we owe him: our relations to each other, as social creatures, who can instruct, assist, affect, and animate one another, by joining together in one common exercise: and our situation in such a world as this; all render such an ordinance indispensable. Repeal this commandment; prohibit this practice: you render public religion a matter of indifference, or you destroy it. Such a repeal or prohibition, implies an absurdity; which cannot be said of the repeal or prohibition of any ceremonial precept. The honour and worship of God,

the interests of religion and morality, and the best happiness of mankind, would be inadequately provided for, without such an observance.

3. We cannot, indeed, from the reason and nature of things, demonstrate, that exactly one day in seven, and neither more or less, is required for this moral duty. But the plain matter of fact, that God hath, under every dispensation, allotted that proportion invariably, amounts to the fullest demonstration, that infinite Wisdom judged it the best possible. And experience proves, that the conscientious observance of this proportion, interferes not with the advantageous management of either agriculture, manufactures, or commerce; is exceedingly favourable to the cause of liberty and humanity; tends greatly to civilize mankind as social creatures; and fully suffices for maintaining and advancing religion in the world, as far as it is generally and strictly observed.

4. But whether the day to be observed be the first, or the last, or any other of the seven, is evidently, in itself, indifferent. Only some one day must be pitched upon, either by him that gives, or him that receives the law. Nothing can be more reasonable, than that the Lawgiver should determine this matter, and all his subjects acquiesce. Nothing more desirable, than to be, by

his determination, delivered from uncertainty and disputation about it. But if he who instituted one day, afterwards change it for another, his authority demands our submission. He, who from the creation, appointed the seventh day, in remembrance of it's completion ; appears to have changed that day for the first, when an event had taken place, of still greater consequence to fallen sinners. We now every week commemorate the triumphant resurrection of our divine Redeemer. To avoid needlessly shocking Jewish prejudices, this (as some other changes) in the wisdom of God, was effected silently and gradually, by example, and not by express precept. As christians, all seem to have observed the first day of the week : the Jewish converts were connived at, in observing the seventh also, together with circumcision, and their other ceremonies. Our risen Lord, repeatedly met and spake peace to his disciples, who on the first day of the week were assembled ; if not the first time, yet, probably, afterwards by some intimation from him. It appears to have been on the first day of the week, when the disciples being of one accord in one place, the Holy Ghost came visibly and audibly amongst them. On the first day of the week, they met to break bread, as well as hear the word preached. On the first day of the week, they were to lay by for the poor, as God had prospered in the preceding week.

St.

St. John dignifies this day with the title, "The Lord's Day." And the first is the only day of the seven mentioned afterwards in the scripture, by way of favourable distinction: sabbaths being spoken of as abrogated ceremonies. And ecclesiastical and civil history, with concurring evidence, represent it as the distinguishing practice of christians, in all ages and nations ever since, to observe this day as sacred to religion.

5. Having determined it's obligation, let us briefly consider how it should be hallowed. The Lord of the sabbath hath himself repeatedly allowed of works of necessity, and mercy. And in thus relaxing the rigour of the ceremonial part of the commandment, hath enforced the moral part, and implicitly prohibited all other works. But works of necessity must be so in reality, not pretence. Settling accounts, writing letters, taking journeys, paying labourers, making provision for indulgence of pride and luxury, &c. which create so much necessary work for the Lord's day; are as bad, or worse, than keeping open shop, and working at a trade, tho' less scandalous. No works, which are done out of covetousness, pride, or luxury, can consist with hallowing a day to the Lord. Committing known sin is serving satan, and to employ the Lord's day in satan's service, proves the faithful, willing, indefatigable servant. All diversions and trifling visits,
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and all visits, whose direct object and tendency is not to glorify God, and edify one another, are inconsistent with hallowing the sabbath. But men have no leisure on other days: that is to say, they have so much to do in the world, and for their bodies, that six days are too little: and so little to do about their souls, and for God, that one day is too much; wherefore they must borrow time from the latter, to eke out the former. Idleness is as bad, or worse: for it implies, that we have nothing to do with spiritual things, or with and for God; or nothing worth doing. But indeed we have enough important, profitable, and pleasant work to do on that day. That holy day, we are to honour and delight in, not doing our own pleasure, not speaking our own words thereon. Extraordinary diligence and earnestness in searching the scriptures; examining our hearts and lives, our state and conduct; meditation and secret devotion: If we have families, instructing and praying for and with them; and repeatedly attending on public ordinances, will, even with early rising, require much of this holy day. Edifying conversation, joined with social worship, and acts of charity to the souls and bodies of men, demand all the remainder, that can be spared from unavoidable avocations. He, who values his immortal soul, or has any love to God, desire of his favour, delight in his service, or zeal for his glory, will

will not complain of being required thus to hallow one day in a week, as if it were a galling yoke ; but will complain of himself, if depraved nature feel weary : and will deem it the best and most pleasant day in the week.

The general profanation of the Lord's day, proves the dislike men have for religion, and the contempt they have for the authority and commandment of the Lord. Of those, who pay some decent respect to the day, multitudes are formal hypocrites we allow ; and christians, indeed, serve God every day. Shall we therefore, on such pretences, undervalue this divine appointment ? God forbid.—That degree of reverence, small as it is, which is now paid to the christian sabbath, is so far a public protestation against atheism, infidelity, and profaneness ; a public profession of Christ's religion ; and puts public honour upon God and his worship. All business being by appointment suspended, servants, labourers, mechanics, and tradesmen, that is, the bulk of mankind, have leisure and opportunity to assemble and hear the word of God ; and faith comes by hearing. Multitudes crowd the places where the word of God is preached, and many are converted. True christians, being sanctified but in part, lose much of the vigour of their affections, by their unavoidable intercourse with the world ; which decays are repaired,

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together with an increase of knowledge and grace, by stately and seriously hallowing the sabbath. Could we but witness the universal hallowing the sabbath, we might reasonably hope for a proportionable increase of real religion. Were it totally neglected, profaneness, ignorance, and infidelity, we may confidently foretel, *would*; barbarity, tyranny, and slavery, probably *might*, deluge the world. Let impartial judges then determine, from this imperfect sketch, who are the best friends of mankind; they who would tolerate and vindicate it's profanation; or they who plead for, and would enforce it's strict observance.

F I N I S.

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